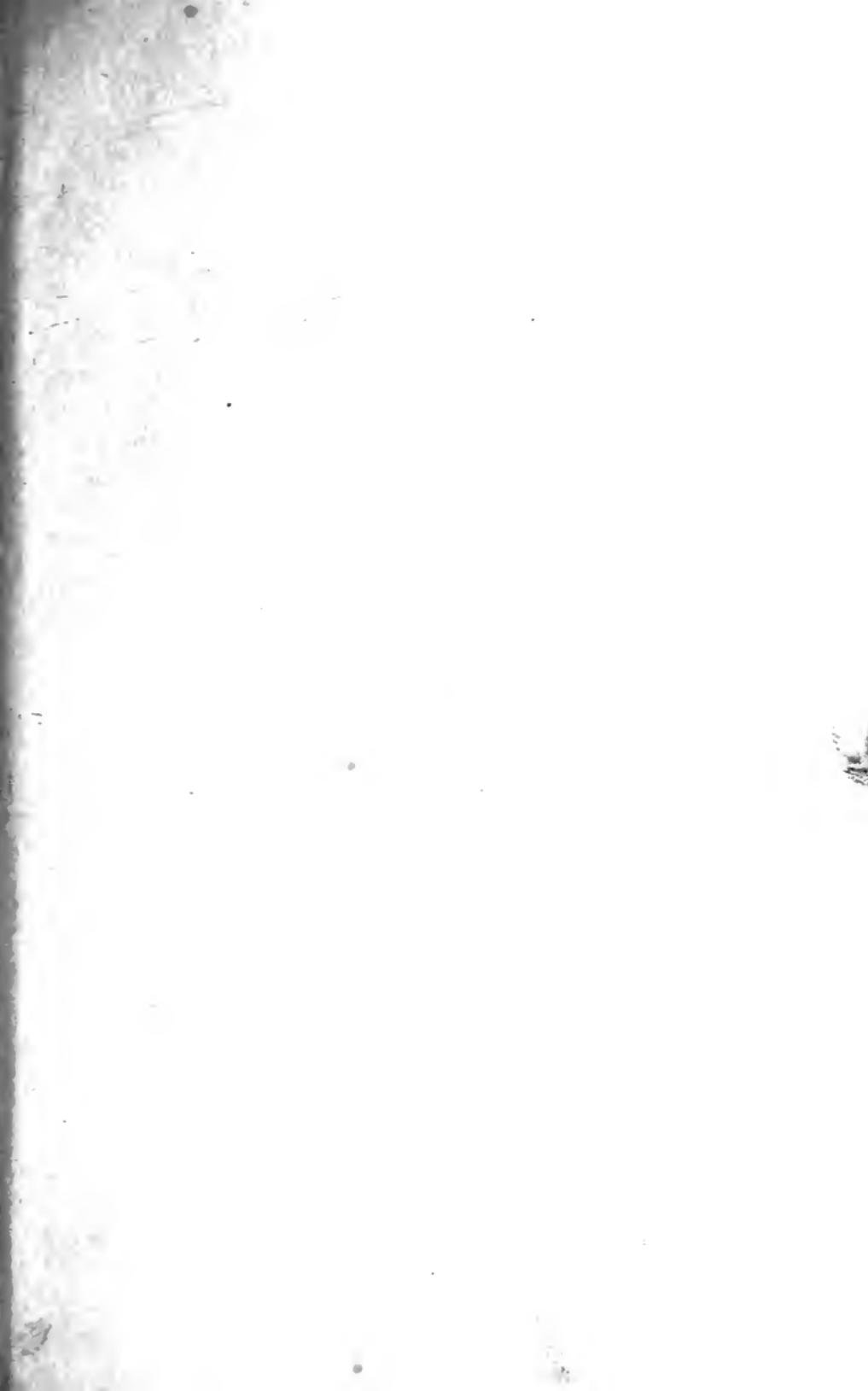
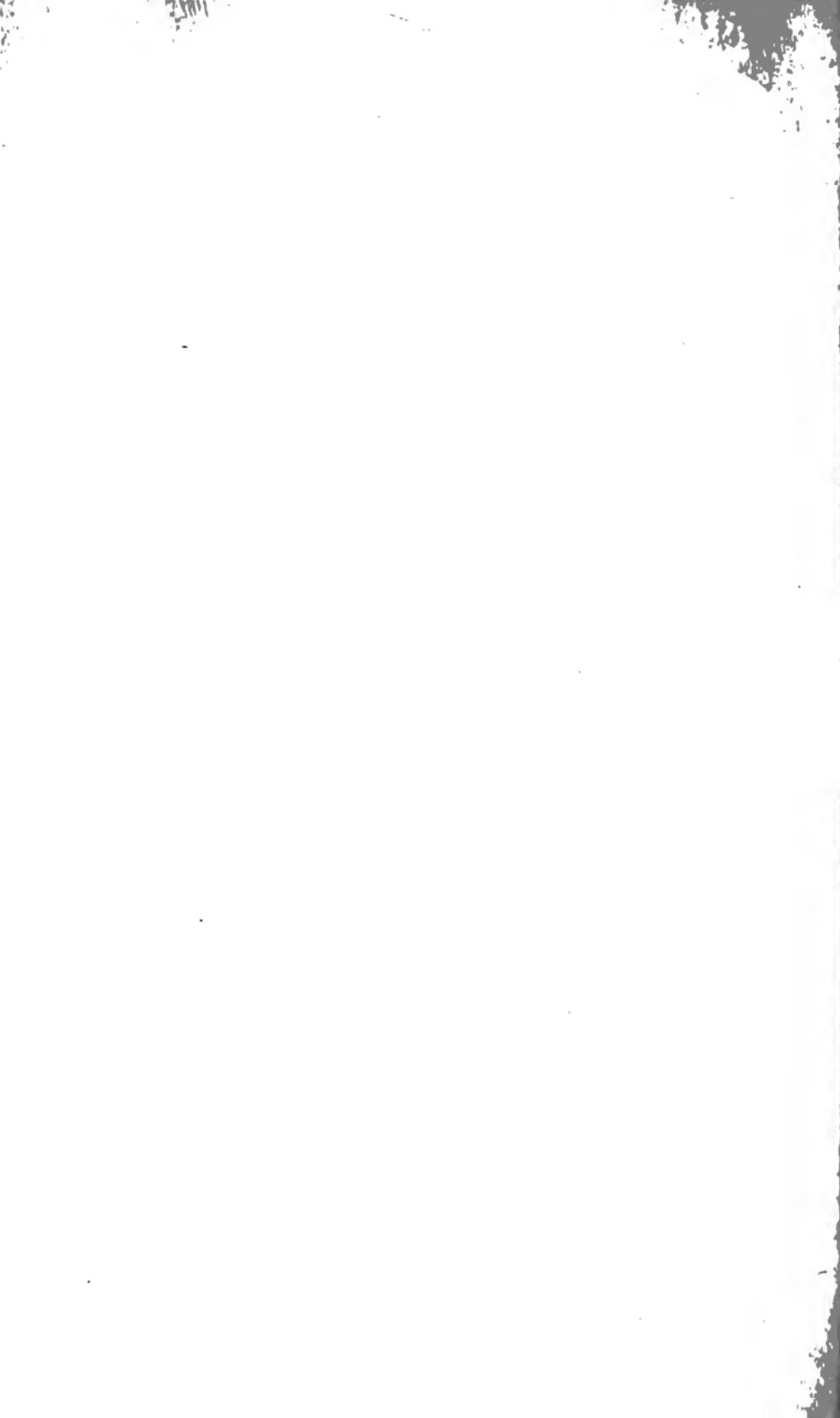




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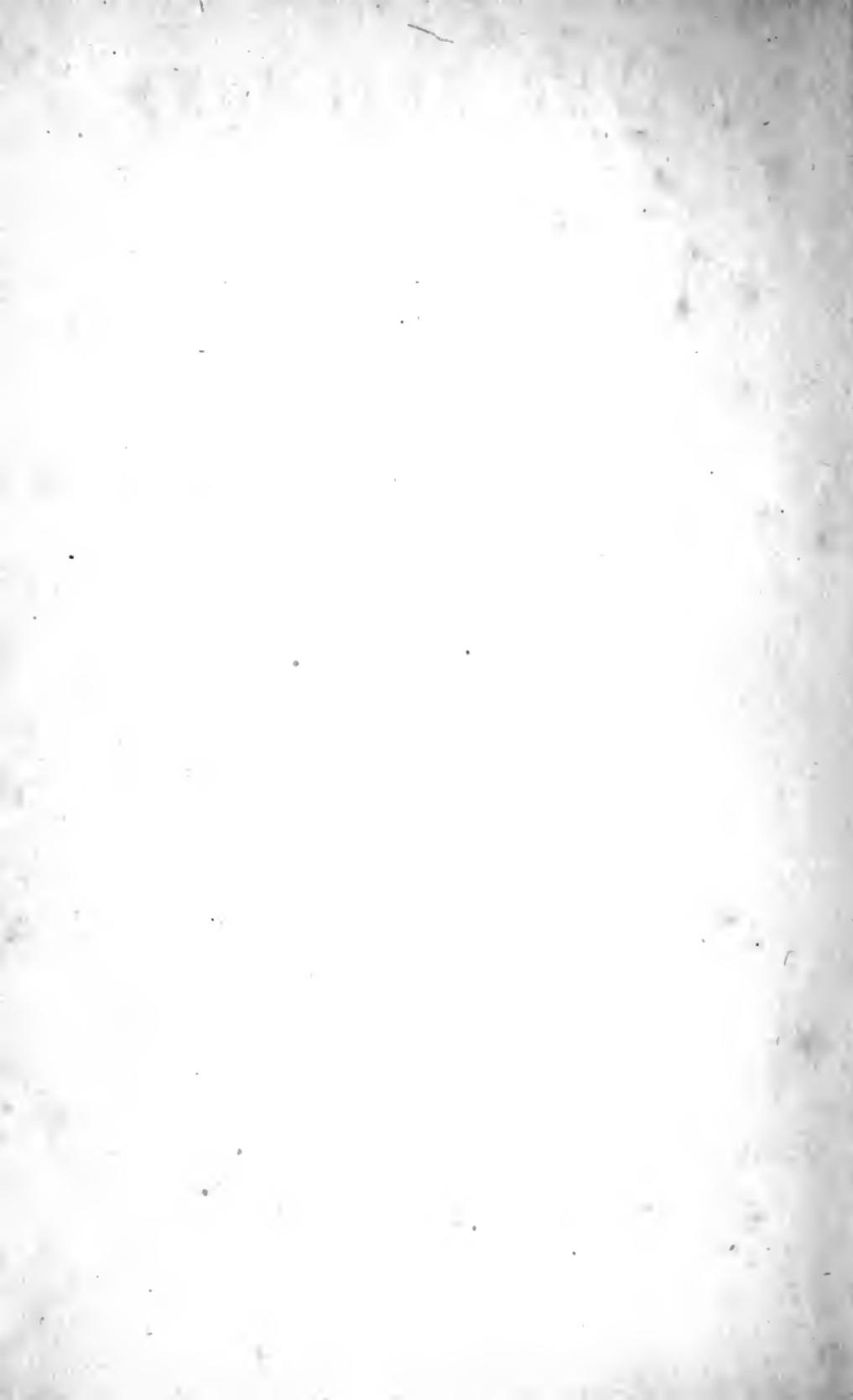
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OLIVER BEAUMONT.

AND

LORD LATIMER.

VOL. I.



OLIVER BEAUMONT.

AND

LORD LATIMER.

BY

LADY EMILY PONSONBY,

AUTHOR OF

“THE DISCIPLINE OF LIFE,”

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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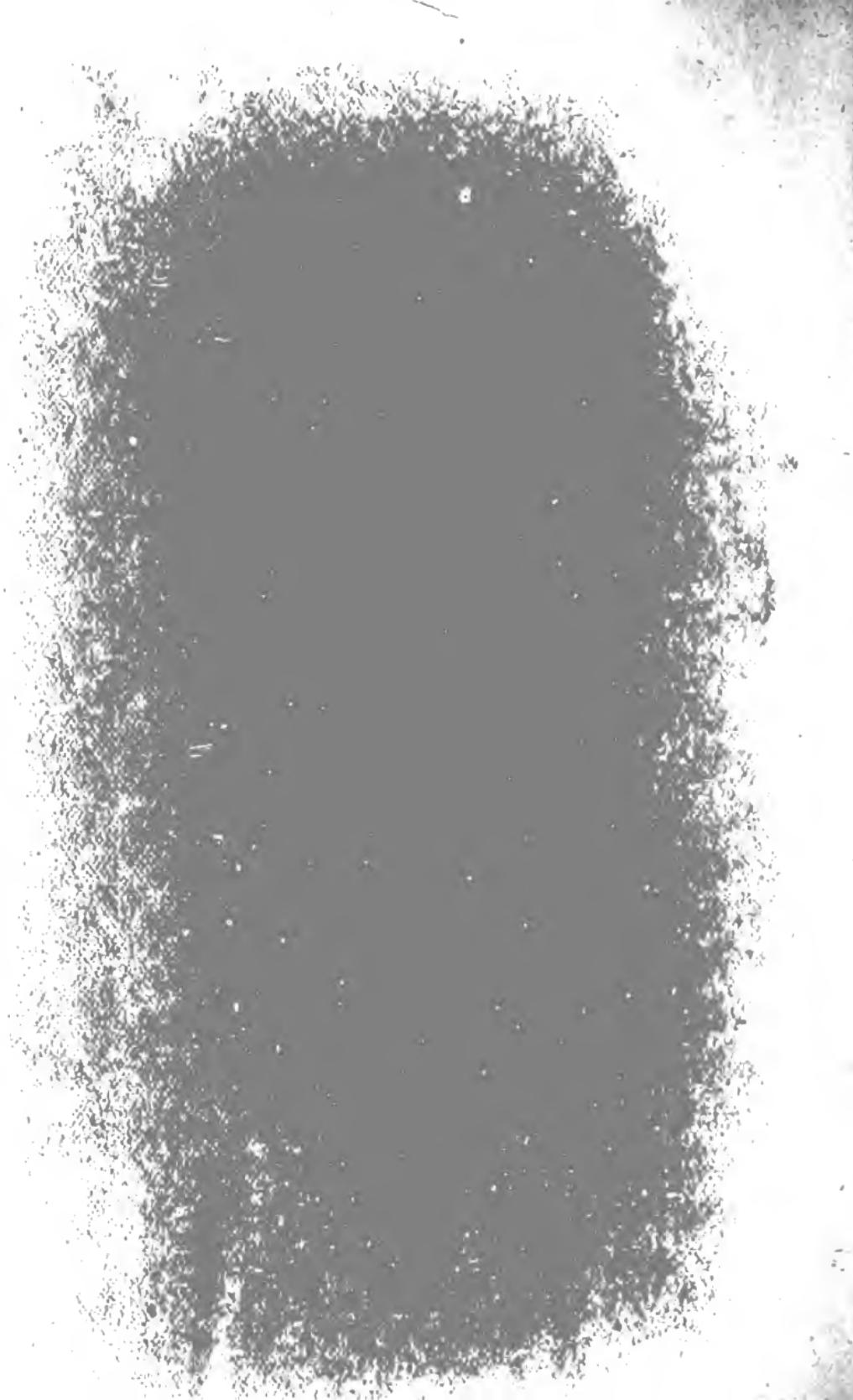
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OLIVER BEAUMONT.

He that good thinketh good may do,
And God will keep him thereunto ;
For was never good work wrought
Without beginning of good thought.



CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN DELAFORD, commonly called Jack Delaford, came, by the will of an eccentric old gentleman, into possession of a large fortune. In simple thoughtlessness—by the impulse, that is to say, of a careless but kindly heart—he had performed an act of kindness and courtesy, and the receiver of the kindness repaid it by the donation of all he possessed. It was on a railway journey that the act was performed. Captain Delaford went on his way and thought of the act, and the unknown old gentleman, no more. The old gentleman, on the contrary, watched his unthinking companion; discovered his name, and a very few hours after his first and last meeting,

made in his favour a will which for seven years lay in his drawer unaltered.

Up to the time when Captain Delaford had this piece of fortune (whether good or evil fortune depends not on the fact, but on the person to whom it comes), he had tossed about London on an income sufficient for a single man, but small. His life was a careless, dissipated, good-natured life; not unhappy, for he had not sufficient powers of thought to be unhappy; but not happy, for to a life devoid of aim, devoid of object, and devoid of affection, the word could not apply. He had no near relations; he had no very great friends—not such a friend as makes up for the want of near ties—but he had friends and acquaintances by the million. The kindly heart with which he was born made him universally popular; a nature easy and yielding made him the prey of circumstances; and his brains, though they were good brains as far as they went, were so narrow in compass that he did not seem

to have the power of being in any respect different from what the circumstance of the moment made him. He went right on, sensible enough in discharging the common affairs that came in his way, but always absorbed by the day, and looking neither before nor behind.

He was one to whom marriage would have been everything. A sensible wife in early days would have made a man of him, would have made him a respectable and useful member of society. But Jack Dela-ford saw a good deal of life, and in the course of his life saw a good deal of the cares of poverty where there is a family to provide for ; and being an easy man, not luxurious, but liking ease and comfort, and dreading care, he early said, “No wife for me.”

Thus it was that he tossed about the world, leading a life of simple dissipation ; that is to say, using all the means and appliances men have found to dissipate time and thought,

from which means vice itself was not always excluded.

Jack Delaford had a good and kindly nature ; the phrase “ that he was no man’s enemy but his own,” might have been used concerning him with as much truth as so false a phrase can ever possess. But the thing is an impossibility ; and with Jack Delaford it was an impossibility. The very fact that he had a kindly nature and a good heart made his deviations into the crooked way the more dangerous. No one feared to follow where so excellent a fellow trod.

Had this truth ever been set before Captain Delaford’s eyes, he would probably have been a different man. But it so happened that it never was set before him : not this particular truth, that he encouraged young men, many young men, to step into the path of error and misery ; not the responsibility of every man regarding his fellow-men. He heard many sermons, and was often affected by them, but it did so

happen that his conscience regarding *others* was never awakened. Had it been so, the exceeding goodness of his nature, and horror of doing harm to any one, would have forced him into thought.

Amid all the carelessness of his life, Jack was never betrayed into irreligion. He had a very great respect for religion. This is a strange phrase to use, if we consider all that it implies; but it is a true description of the feelings of many. They believe and they respect, but they neither love nor practise. Their respect is not without merit—they do at times, and in certain companies, exercise a courage which has something in it akin to the faith and courage of a confessor, but there they pause. They respect and cherish the name of Christian, yet heedlessly break the lowest Christian laws.

Jack was one of these; he had so great a respect for religion that, when visiting in a quiet, orderly, religious family, as was some-

times the case, he was as orderly and religious as they. He would accompany them to church once, twice, even thrice in the day; would sing with the singers, and listen and approve of the sermon, and enter zealously into all questions of good works. But the following day, if his fate took him to an unorderly and not religious house, he would cast in his lot with the rest; always excepting that respect for religion which never left him. At times, if, as sometimes occurred, he heard a powerful sermon, his conscience would awake, and he would say, "If all this is true—and no doubt it is true—what will become of Jack Delaford?" And for a day or two he would be pensive and uneasy. In those moods, had any one caught hold of him, had any one understood his character, had any father-confessor probed his feelings, arrested his attention, deepened the impression, the mood might have become a better thing than a mood. But in the life he led, no

one did penetrate his character ; and time for thought was so rare that the mood hardly arose before it was dissipated. He left the fate of Jack Delaford to chance, and forgot the doubts that had disquieted him.

He was thirty-five years old when his piece of fortune came to him. It was very sudden. He came home one day to dress for dinner, and found a letter from a lawyer unknown to him. The lawyer begged to see him on the following morning, but in the meanwhile stated shortly that £10,000 a year had been left to him.

The mind of Jack Delaford was narrow, and he was at the moment so absorbed by the dinner to which he was going—a dinner given by the regiment to which he belonged to some distinguished officer—that he hardly took in the purport of what he had read. Two or three times, while taking off and putting on his clothes, he said, “What a lucky dog I am !” But the dinner, not the legacy, occupied his brain ; and when he

had hurried off, and become an actor in a scene of some excitement, he forgot even to say "lucky dog." The important piece of news passed from his memory. Late in the evening, when the excitement was over, it recurred to his mind, and in the very same phrase he had used when alone, he made known what he had read to some friends. But his friends had minds of a different conformation to his, and their interest, and their excitement, and their inquiries, and doubts, and congratulations, first made him aware of what a very important piece of news it was. Before he went to bed, the truth had begun to penetrate his brain ; and when he got into bed, the brain which, on this occasion, had some excuse for being narrow, was unable to admit the idea of sleep. He tossed about, thinking and thinking, planning and speculating, hoping and doubting, and longing for morning, that he might hasten to see if the strange news was really true.

There was no doubt of the truth—the

will had been duly signed and witnessed seven years before; and the reason of the legacy was stated in the will. Jack then remembered the incident, and being a modest man, blushed as he remembered. "I am really ashamed," he said; and he felt what he said.

"Had Mr. Beaumont no relations?" he asked, after gazing at the will.

The reason he asked the question was owing to a clause in the will, for otherwise his mind so accepted things as they were, that it might not have struck him to inquire. The property was left to him absolutely, in special words ordaining that by deed of appointment he might leave it to whom he would; but a clause in proper legal phrase was added, that, should he fail to make a will, or should the property be in any way left without a possessor, then the nearest of kin of the name of Beaumont was to be sought out, and to him the property was to go.

"Not that I am aware of," replied the

lawyer. “Certainly none who have any claims upon him.”

Being satisfied on all points, Jack Delaford took the steps necessary to the occasion, and entered on the possession of his fortune.

In the first instance, the excitement of his friends, their congratulations, their hearty rejoicing in his luck, elated him. He thought he was very happy, and he thought he was going to be a very happy man. But it was not so. When the fortune came in, carelessness of mind departed ; and though in some minds care and happiness are not incompatible, they were not so in his.

His narrow mind became absorbed by his riches and possessions. He had no other thoughts—not absorbed by them in a miserly way, far otherwise, but by the fact of having them ; by the duties they entailed.

It was said that had any friend, any adviser, any spiritual pastor or master, understood his character, they could before now, by touching on his sense of responsibility,

have made a different man of him. His conscience was dulled as regarded himself, but as regarded others it was very keen. It was this sense of responsibility, this sensitive conscience, which now came into play and mastered him. He had not the brain to consider his duties—sift, and weigh, and decide upon conflicting claims ; every claim, every duty seemed to him equally imperative, equally pressing ; his conscience called on him to fulfil all, and the *man*, between his perplexed brain and his crying conscience, became a miserable being.

His property consisted of land in several places, but there was one large property of £7,000 a year, with a house upon it. It was here that his perplexities began. He went to see it, dreams of a fine country house floating before him ; he found a large, desolate, dilapidated, and almost unfurnished mansion, with a wild, rough spot called a garden surrounding it, overgrowing it, shadowing it with gloom.

“This must all be put in order,” he said to the person who attended him.

“It will cost a mint of money,” replied the man.

“Well, but I can afford it.”

But no sooner was it known that Captain Delaford, the new possessor of the property, was on a visit in the country, than his ears were besieged by all the wants and necessities of the district.

The late proprietor, Mr. Beaumont, had been a hard man—not at all a kindly or a courteous one. The kindly act of Captain Delaford had perhaps made the greater impression on his mind because he was himself hard. Though he did not neglect actual barefaced duties to his dependents and tenantry, he was unassailable to many a crying want and grievance. There was a hard-worked Rector, sinking in spirit at the sight of the increasing wants of his parish, and no hand was stretched out to help him. There were children growing up in ignor-

ance, because the schools were insufficient ; there were epidemics because of the miserable state of the cottages, and the over-crowding of the dwellings of the poor. Owing to various causes, the population during the last few years had nearly doubled ; but although an increase of income had followed, no proper provision for wants spiritual or wants temporal had been made.

All persons who had anything to say visited Captain Delaford ; each man, very properly, putting forward his own grievance, and his own hope or recommendation for the future. All were good men and sensible men, and had sensible plans in their heads and offered sensible observations ; but the poor narrow brain of their hearer was paralyzed by the multitude of ideas that thronged upon him. To each he promised consideration, and he went back to London to consider with might and main.

From that moment his misery began. He

could not rest. In vain his younger friends said to him, "Hang duties! enjoy yourself for a time." In vain a sager friend observed, "Set your house in order—go down and live. Then see what you can do." In vain his lawyer remonstrated, "One thing at a time, sir. Hercules only performed one labour at a time." It was worse than speaking to the deaf adder. The din of conflicting claims within made him deaf to advice. He had seen with his own eyes the necessities of his own people; their claims had struck their fangs into him, and he could not free himself.

He threw himself heart and soul into business, and not having a head for business, he *muddled*—there is no better word—all he had to do. He took advice now—he was too willing to take advice. Conscious of his own small powers, he took advice of everybody he saw, and the consequence was unceasing change of plans, waste of money, mistakes and failures, despondency and regrets. At

the end of three years his health was failing him. He had no regular disease, but heart and brain were alike weakened by the incessant strain upon them. Always planning, always hoping, always disappointed. His sleep failed him—his appetite failed him. He worked on, but he languished.

As he had no actual disease, he consulted no physician. To his friends, he said all he wanted was sleep; when his mind had got used to its bothers he should sleep, and then it would be all right. He doctored himself therefore, now taking a cordial, and now a cooling draught, and so struggled on, working hard all the while. But one day he had a serious attack, a kind of faint, attended with unpleasant sensations. He then asked advice, but receiving the advice that he must rest, he said it was impossible; and in the mad way in which persons act, declared that physicians were humbugs, and continued to bother his mind as before.

He grew worse; he was at last confined

to his room. He saw that life was in danger, and he began to consider. He was not much dismayed at the thoughts of death; his mind had taken a turn which made both life and death secondary considerations. His subject of consideration was, what to do with his wealth.

One evening he sent for the physician whose advice he had neglected. The physician came, and found him lying on a sofa in a room strewed with letters and papers of various sorts.

He sat down by him, looked at him, felt his pulse, looked grave, but said nothing.

“Well, Dr. Webb, how am I?” Jack asked.

The physician made no immediate reply.

“I see what you think,” said his patient, calmly, “and that is only what I expected. You think I am in a bad way? But what I want to know is, am I doomed?—is death certain? People are often in a bad way, and yet they get over it. Must I die?—that is what I want to know.”

“ I do not think you *must*,” was the reply, after a moment’s pause. “ As you have said, I think you are in a bad way; but I still think complete rest might save you. Try a sea-voyage. That, I think, would be the best thing for you.”

“ Now, look here!” exclaimed Jack, and he sprang up almost with alacrity from his couch, and walked to the window—“ come here and look at this moon!”

Dr. Webb, amazed and puzzled, obeyed him, stood by his side, and looked at a glorious moon rising up—“ climbing the heavens,” as poets express it.

“ Now, do you suppose, if you and all the College of Physicians united were to order that moon to stop work, not to fulfil its duty of shining round the world, it would obey you?”

He looked with a determined glance at his physician, who, to humour him, gravely replied, “ I fancy not.”

“ And that is my case. I have got a work

to do, and I have not led so good a life, I can tell you, that I can afford to trifle with my duty when I see it. I will not rest, please God, till I rest in my coffin."

Physicians are often blamed without consideration. Dr. Webb was blamed in after-days for not having saved Jack's life. But what can a physician do in such a case? He has no power to put a man of commonly sane mind in a strait waistcoat; nor even, had that been possible, can a man's mind be calmed against his will.

The day after his interview with Dr. Webb, Jack Delaford sent for Mr. Beaumont's lawyer, Mr. Borodaile, of the house of Borodaile and Dashwood. He had not had much personal communication with this gentleman. He had employed a friend of his own as a man of business, and such communications as he had had, had been chiefly through him. But he sent for him now.

"I once asked you, Mr. Borodaile," he said, "whether Mr. Beaumont had any re-

lations? I was satisfied at the time with your answer; but I feel now I ought to have made further inquiries. Had he really no relations? Have you heard nothing? Have there been no remonstrances against his will in my favour?"

"None, sir. I have heard nothing from any friend or relative on the subject."

Jack thought for a moment.

"But you think there are relations?"

"I fancy there are. There must, I think, be distant ones; but he did not notice them; nor do I think they ever thought of him. I think, sir, you may set your mind at rest about relations. The property is your own, to do with as you please——"

"I am not sure of that," Jack muttered.

Mr. Borodaile went on—

"Mr. Beaumont was an only son; so was his father. Mr. Beaumont, the father, was, as I have heard, an idle, ill-conditioned fellow. He married early, and married

beneath him ; and both father and mother died when our Mr. Beaumont was a boy. He was placed by some friend of his father's in a merchant's office, and luck, and perseverance, and parsimonious habits, made him at seventy a rich man. I do not know all the steps by which he became rich, but I do know that what he had was his own to bestow, that no relations ever made any claim upon him, and that he never acknowledged any relations as having a claim."

" But you think there are relations ?" Jack inquired again ; for his mind was now possessed with one idea.

" I daresay there are. I can inquire, if you choose. But a heap of relations is a perplexing thing, especially to a person in the state of health—"

" What is a man's duty," said Jack, sternly—as sternly, that is, as his kindly nature could speak, " must be done, whatever his state of health. Before I die—which I fancy I may do any day—I wish to dispose of my

property properly. If among Mr. Beaumont's relations I can make a choice to satisfy my conscience, that I imagine will be the best thing I can do. Can you employ a person to make inquiries for me, without allowing any among them to know that such a person as I am exists?"

Mr. Borodaile said there would be no difficulty in making inquiries secretly and discreetly; and promising to have them made at once, departed.

In about ten days the result of the inquiries was made known to Captain Delaford. Two families of relations had been found. The one bore the name of Beaumont. The present head of the family was a gentleman farmer in Cheshire; his great-grandfather and the late Mr. Beaumont's grandfather had been brothers. This great-grandfather was the elder son, and had inherited a few—a very few—paternal acres. These, with the addition of some he tenant-ed, he farmed himself—bestowed on them,

that is to say, personal supervision ; so had his son, and his son's son, and so did the present possessor. The late Mr. Beaumont's grandfather was the younger brother, had early parted from his elder brother, and come to seek his fortunes in London. Neither brother was in circumstances to do much for the other, and as neither of them possessed any warmth of character or strong natural affections, they had parted to meet no more. The younger branch had won and lost, and won again in London ; the elder had remained solidly rooted at home, with few ideas beyond the cares of the farm.

The present Mr. Beaumont, of Bloomfields, in Cheshire, had been married for about six or seven years, and had a son of five years old and a little daughter.

The other family was a step nearer in relationship, but in the female line. The head of this family was a clergyman on the borders of Herefordshire and Wales, of the name of

Vaughan. His grandmother had been a Miss Beaumont, sister to the late Mr. Beaumont's grandfather, and to the great-grandfather of the family in Cheshire. She had married a Welsh squire, and had died shortly after the birth of a daughter. This daughter had married a clergyman of the name of Vaughan, and her son was the gentleman just named. She had also had two daughters, one unmarried and one a widow, but there were no families to report upon.

Mr. Vaughan, the clergyman, was the rector of a living of about £400 a year. He was married, and had two or three children; the eldest was a girl of six years old.

These were the particulars—somewhat difficult to understand—regarding the family of Beaumont which were forwarded to Jack Delaford for his consideration. His mind was wholly occupied by one idea, one desire—to leave the property to a worthy

person. The late Mr. Beaumont's relatives should have the first claim, but he had no intention of leaving it to them as a right. His duty was to find or make a person worthy of the trust, and he intended to do it. It was in consequence of this desire that he made one of those wills, the product of weak, conscientious brains, which strive to govern the course of events, and often give much trouble.

Feeling that he, after his idle life, had been very unfit for the trust, he passed over entirely in his thoughts the fathers of the families (who were, he supposed, too old to learn, although neither of them was above forty years old). He fixed his mind on the elder children of the two families, and his first choice, with the usual preference for mankind, was of the boy, Oliver Beaumont, now five years old.

The conditions of the will were these:—

Oliver Beaumont was to be brought up in ignorance of the prospects awaiting him.

If the secret was divulged to him, he forfeited his claim. At one-and-twenty he was to inherit, supposing that before that time he had made choice of a profession, and entered upon it, if it was the Army, or Navy, or official life; or supposing him to choose one of the learned professions, to be in due course of study and preparation for it. He hoped thus to secure an industrious and well-instructed person. Should he not have chosen, he forfeited his claim.

And in that case it was left to Rosamond Vaughan, now six years old, daughter of the Reverend Edward Vaughan.

This will the poor modest, dying, puzzled man was proud of. He had thought it out in sleepless nights; and his still sleepless nights were calmed by the peace of conscience it brought. He had done his very best, and having done so, he allowed his mind a little rest; or perhaps the worn-out body refused to allow the mind to work any more. Both faded away together, and he

rested at last in his coffin, as he had said.

Until the majority of Oliver Beaumont, the property was left in the hands of Messrs. Borodaile and Dashwood ; they were to make choice of an agent, who should reside on the spot, and see that poor Jack's plans and wishes were carried out as far as possible. In their hands were left the property, and the will, and the *secret*. The secret was to be communicated shortly after the death of Captain Delaford to the father and mother of Oliver, and to no other person or persons whatever. If they divulged it, their son forfeited his claim. To the Vaughan family nothing was to be said.

N.B.—It is possible that the provisions of the will of Captain Delaford, as described, may not be exactly permissible ; but as, though childish, it is not unnatural, it is hoped that the freedom assumed for the powers of will-makers—if it be a freedom—may in a fiction be allowed.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. BEAUMONT, the mother of Oliver, was recovering from a severe illness. She had lately been confined, and her little baby had died, and anxiety regarding the child, together with a cold she had caught, had brought on a severe illness. She was now recovering, and although not yet able to be active and busy, as it was her custom to be, she was allowed to turn her mind to domestic concerns without fear of danger.

During her illness, Mr. Beaumont had received a letter from Messrs. Borodaile and Dashwood. Mr. Beaumont was a man "whose talk was of bullocks." He was possessed of good sense, a good heart, and a little, but good education—that is to say,

his education, so far as it went, was thorough—it did not go very far. He was a good husband, a good father, a good master, therefore a good man so far as he went. He did not aim very high. But his talk was chiefly of bullocks. His farm had that part of his heart where care dwells. It was not exactly his treasure, nor did he love it as well as his wife and children ; but it had all his care, and almost all his time—it was his passion, and apparently his vocation. The few paternal acres he inherited brought him in about £800 a year. It was a nice little property, with a quaint family mansion upon it. By farming it himself, together with the land he rented, he more than doubled his income, and brought up his family in ease, and order, and comfort. Not aiming high, but aiming to fit them, however many children he might have, for the station in which they were born.

The care of the farm, and the coming in, or income, he took on himself ; the care of

the family, and the going out, he laid on his wife. The children especially were the mother's care—he never troubled himself about them; not, it must be understood, from want of interest, but because he had laid that care on his wife.

When he received the letter from Messrs. Borodaile and Dashwood, his wife was recovering, but was still weak. "Very important," he said, as he read; "but this is my wife's business." And he put the letter away. The day afterwards he thought he had better acknowledge it. This he did, saying he had received the important communication, and would write about it as soon as his wife was restored to health.

Messrs. Borodaile and Dashwood were surprised at the cold, unexcited tone in which this answer was couched. But, in truth, Mr. Beaumont felt coldly on the subject. This legacy, which might come to the boy Oliver in sixteen years, and then only supposing a certain condition was kept, was

a vague thing in his eyes—vague, and therefore, to his working, practical turn, devoid of interest. His mind, like Jack Delaford's, was narrow—not weak like his, but, like his, admitting only a certain quantity of ideas. At the moment the letter arrived, there was about to be a great Cattle Fair in the neighbourhood, and what he should sell and what he should buy was a subject that occupied him wholly; he put the letter carefully aside until his wife should be in a fit state to enter on the business.

Nevertheless, although it did not occupy him in the least, the idea of the legacy during these days was, in the curiously secret, silent way in which ideas will do so, taking possession of his mind. He gave it no time; he was, indeed, wholly occupied with other matters, but every now and then it made itself felt. In the midst of his earnest cogitations regarding profitable sales and purchases, in the very midst of the Cattle Fair, when annoyed at losing some

bargain on which his heart was set, the idea stirred and said, "After all, these things are not so important as they were, for Oliver, at any rate, is provided for." He was hardly conscious of the flitting suggestion ; but it was thus, and in this manner, that the legacy had taken possession of his brain before he came to talk to his wife.

Ten days had passed since the reception of the letter before he said anything about it. The Cattle Fair was over, and Mrs. Beaumont was recovering. She was still upstairs, and lying on a sofa ; but it was the body only that was weak. She was well, and conversation and a little excitement did her good. Although the loss of the little baby had not been a very grievous loss, she had mourned for it as a mother will ; and the doctor who attended her had on this day observed to Mr. Beaumont that the more she had to occupy her mind the better.

Mr. Beaumont did not bestow a great

deal of time upon his wife, but he was not the less very fond of her, and as soon as he heard this opinion, he felt cheerfully that he had got a cure in store. On this day he said, therefore,

“I shall come home to tea with you at seven.”

It was just before haymaking, and time was precious, and during his wife's illness he had taken to himself a little independence, dining at odd times—sometimes early, and sometimes late—and making his cook heartily wish that her mistress was well again.

When the tea was put ready—a large tea, such as Mr. Beaumont sometimes fancied, with hot cakes and a huge loaf—the monthly nurse, who was still in attendance on Mrs. Beaumont, said that, as it was a fine evening, and Mrs. Beaumont had company, she should like to go home for an hour or two. She lived in the neighbourhood. Leave was given, and she went.

When Mr. Beaumont came in, he had made himself tidy, and his wife perceived that she had got the whole man for once. Mr. Beaumont in a hurry—that is to say, during three quarters and half a quarter of the year—was only half a man to her. Sundry questions put aside in her mind to be brought forward on these great occasions bestirred themselves ; and while he was arranging his chair comfortably, putting his head out of window to inspect the sunset, and cutting a preparatory huge slice, or hump off the loaf, she was looking into her store to select the most pressing of her questions.

Mrs. Beaumont was a pretty woman—fair and pensive, gentle and sensible ; such a woman as a man whose talk is chiefly of bullocks very often specially fancies. Her refinement meets something deep down in his nature, surviving amid all the rougher associations of life; and requiring this satisfaction.

“ Why, you look beautiful, Marion ! ” he said heartily, as he watched her thoughtful attitude ; “ you are famously got up to-night ! ”

“ I am almost well now. It has been a long time—a weary time and expense to you, I fear. But it was God’s will, and I could not help it.”

“ Of course you could not. God’s will must be done. And let it be done. Amen. That is what I should always wish to say. It would be well if it was done more than it is in this world ; but we all have our wills, and that’s the truth, and it makes a great struggle. All but you, Marion. I believe you like God’s will better than your own.”

She shook her head with a sad smile, but did not enter on the discussion.

“ Well, I am glad to see you looking so fresh to-night, for I want to talk to you. There’s some business in hand.”

Mrs. Beaumont slipped back her questions into the secret place from whence they had

arisen. She saw that although the whole man might be present, he had a subject of his own to occupy him. It might not be true, as her husband said, that she liked God's will better than her own ; she certainly would have kept her baby, had she been able to do so ; but with regard to her fellow-creatures, she was one who always put their wills before her own.

“About ten days ago,” he said, laying down his knife and plunging his hand into his pocket, “I had this letter. I just answered it ; that is to say, I told the gentleman I had received it ; but I felt it was your business more than mine, and I put it away till I could have your opinion. Now read it, and tell me what you think.” And he took up his knife, and returned to his bread and butter.

Mrs. Beaumont read the letter with a colour coming and going on her cheek. It was gone altogether when she had finished. As she laid it down on her knee, she said,

looking earnestly at her husband—"I must think. It is so very sudden."

"Think away," he said kindly.

Many husbands would have said, "Think ! why, what have you got to think about, when £10,000 a year is offered to your son ?" but Mr. Beaumont was not a hasty man ; he had not caught at the idea, nor was he conscious as yet what he himself thought upon the subject.

He wished also to hear his wife's opinion. He ate on, therefore, patiently, while she lay with her eyes on the letter. At last she looked at him again and said,

"I do not like it. If I had my will I would refuse the legacy."

Then and there Mr. Beaumont suddenly became conscious of what he thought. He knew then that the prospect of the legacy had taken a place in his mind, in his ideas, in his vision of the future.

But he was not hasty. He only replied, "Hardly refuse, Marion."

“I do not know,” she cried; “it seems to me that it will poison life. A secret is a painful thing. It seems to me even already that a wall is being built between my boy and me.” In her earnestness she put up her hand in the form of a barrier. “There will be deception in all our dealings with him.”

“That’s a hard word, Marion. Hardly deception, I should say. Read me the letter. No, give it me. I will read it aloud.”

And taking it from her fingers he read it in an emphatic sonorous voice, pausing at one or two passages to take in the sense, and twice repeating the last sentence, “Should the secret be properly kept, and the other condition fulfilled, it will be our duty, when your son Oliver Beaumont attains the age of one and twenty, to hand over to him the property of the late Captain John Dela-ford.”

“There is no deception there, Marion.

It is all clear as day. Is anyone there?" he asked suddenly. "Is anyone in the next room?"

"I think not. Mrs. Greyson has gone home for an hour or two. But it may be best to look."

He walked to the door, which was just ajar, pushed it open and saw all quiet. closed it and sat down again.

"There is no deception, Marion," he repeated.

"Not in the will. The deception will be in us—chiefly in me. I shall teach my boy with this secret on my mind. There will be a thought between me and him. I shall have to urge him to choose a profession, and I shall know I have a secret reason for what I say."

"Well, but—well but, a profession is a good thing—good for all men. I sometimes wish I had had one myself in my young days."

"I know it!" she cried, eagerly—"I feel

it ; I should wish Oliver at all events to follow a profession. But do you not see what I mean ? I feel if I once let my mind think of this, if we once accept it, that the prospect will take hold of our hearts. We shall do all we can to fulfil the condition. I feel I shall no longer act for my boy as I would, for his highest good ; I shall have a low, earthly motive poisoning all I say." Her voice, which was a very soft one, soft and low, became almost shrill as she spoke.

Mr. Beaumont, though a slow man, saw what she meant. He did not mean to refuse, whatever she said ; but he liked to hear her unworldly views, and cast in his mind for some answering good thought to meet hers. While he was searching about for this, he let drop a short sentence which was as effective as anything he could say.

"There's one thing, Marion—I don't think we are quite free agents in the matter. What would Oliver say to us, one of these

days, if he knew we had refused such a thing?"

"That is true," she said, suddenly struck, and feeling at once she must give in.

"Fathers may do a great deal, no doubt," he observed, shaking his head—"I am all for fathers' authority. But I should hardly like to have this on my mind all Oliver's young days. If I heard him wishing for half-a-crown, I should feel that some day he would turn upon me and say I had defrauded him."

"He never would. But I see it—I see it. It must be accepted, and we must do the best we can, and forget it as much as we can; and pray," she added, softly, "that we may not set our hearts upon it."

"Very right. Amen!" he said, seriously. Then, having found, as he hoped, a really good thought in his head, he brought it forth—"And there is this to be said, Marion. From what the gentlemen say, this poor Captain Delaford was anxious

about his property. He wishes it to go to a person fit to manage it. Now, you see, in educating Oliver and forcing him to choose a profession, you may be thinking of the highest motives you can; you need not think of the £10,000 a year, but the ten thousand people he will be wanted to guide and influence. Whatever profession he goes into, whether it is to knock about in the army or study for the law, he will be getting so much good into him for his future duties. It seems to me that is the way to look at it."

"Yes," and the cloud partly lightened from her face—"yes, I see that. Certainly, it will be a great responsibility, and I hope and pray Oliver will be fit for it. I wish it had never been, with all my heart, but I see it must be accepted. We have no choice."

CHAPTER III.

MRS. BEAUMONT had shown an instinctive knowledge of herself, as well as of human nature in general, in saying that if once the legacy was accepted, even though reluctantly, she should set her heart upon it. It became a subject of her thoughts, an object in the future, an anxiety in the present. It invested Oliver with a new importance. Troublesome, noisy, good-tempered, pleasure-loving Oliver became a personage. His sayings and doings were noted and watched ; his propensities were speculated on. His parents had too much simple sense to make the change in his distant prospects the cause of a change in childhood. He was unmolested in his childish whims and fancies ; was allowed to pass

his life in paddling in the water, and making mud pies, as before. But Oliver, had he been of a turn to speculate and comment, might have observed that his mud-pies were more noticed than before, that he was no longer troublesome Oliver, whose absence from any tidy room was an object to be desired, but a being whose comings and goings were considered, and whose privileges had received an extension.

Oliver was not of a turn to speculate. He received indulgence with that happy confidence that it was his right, which characterizes sweet and hopeful natures. Indulgence he received benignly ; a grave look he coaxed away ; advice he slid from as rapidly as he could. Indulgence being his right, he made no remarks on more or less ; being in his own eyes a creature of supreme importance, notice attracted no notice. He knew he was Oliver, the beloved of his parents' heart, and he rested happily on that knowledge.

The thought which had been put into Mrs. Beaumont's mind regarding his fitness for his future duties, was perhaps the chief cause of the tenacity with which the idea persecuted her. She had by nature so tender a conscience, that the thought of a duty laid fast hold upon her. She had too much good sense to allow the influence of this thought to appear in her words and actions ; but it made her watch and weigh Oliver's character with a premature and questioning watchfulness ; made her almost grieve over its childish heedlessness ; made her tremble at his early developed love of pleasure and hate of trouble.

It was not for many months that the word profession was used ; and when Oliver was asked his feelings on this point, the question came quite by chance. His birthday of six years old was two days after Christmas. Partly because it was Christmas-time, partly because Oliver was now a personage, he was invited on this great occasion to dine—

actually to dine with his parents, who dined very early on that evening, to allow of the indulgence. His little sister, Dorothy, two years younger, came in for a few moments, but she was soon taken to bed ; and Oliver remained in his glory.

There were mince-pies on this occasion, and Oliver, as he sat munching his mince-pie, expressed his intention of having mince-pies every day when he grew up.

“ That must depend,” his mother observed, “ on what you are, and where you are.”

“ No, mamma, it shan’t depend ; I like mince-pies, and when I am a man I shall have them every day.”

“ I mean to say that in some professions people can’t have what they please, even if they have the money to pay for it. Now, for instance, Oliver, if you are a soldier—soldiers have to go through great hardships, particularly about food. Sometimes they are in places where they can get nothing but

biscuit and salt meat. You can't make a mince-pie out of that. Now, what should you do then?"

Oliver did not mean to give up his mince-pies, but he had seen mince-meat made too often to have a hope that biscuit and salt meat would be enough. He thought for a moment upon the difficult question, then settled it.

"Then I would not be a soldier, mamma."

"What will you be, then?" asked his father, seized with a sudden desire to hear his wishes on the important point.

"I will be—I think, papa, I will be nothing," he said, with a mischievous glance at his mother.

"Oh! but you must be something!" cried his father. "It will not do for a man to be idle. Everybody must do something."

"What is papa?" looking at his mother.

"I am a farmer," answered the father.

"Then I will be a farmer too."

"I don't know how you will like that,

Oliver," observed his mother, in her soft voice. "A farmer has to get up very early, and go out to see his labourers get to work in all weathers. A cold, foggy, wintry morning must see him up early just as much as a Summer's day. I think I know somebody who likes to stay in bed when it is cold."

"I will tell you what I will do, mamma. I will get up and go and see the labourers, and then I will run home to bed."

"That would be a lazy way of being a farmer, or of being anything. I don't like lazy people."

Oliver, who was now eating a mite of bread and cheese, sat thoughtful for a few seconds. He then said,

"Then, mamma, if I *am* lazy, shall you not like *me*?"

He thought he had asked what might be called a poser, but Mrs. Beaumont replied—

"I think I shall like you better if you

are brave, and industrious, and unselfish, and not afraid of trouble."

Oliver's eyes, which had been twinkling with mischief, became round and serious. He said no more, but solemnly finished his repast.

Oliver did not like advice or serious talk; he therefore allowed the subject to drop, and played a merry game at beggar-my-neighbour with his mother. All the while, however, the subject had lodged itself in his small brain; especially he thought of what his mother had said about the hardships of soldiers and the necessity of taking trouble. He had some questions to ask, but he reserved them for one who seldom accompanied her talk with admonition.

Oliver was the king of the nursery. Having been an inhabitant of this castle for two years before his supremacy was disputed, and then only by a girl, and a shy one, he reigned without a rival. His nurse, Mrs.

Baker, belonged to a day that is past ; she was very ignorant, yet clever ; high-principled in certain points, yet with a very imperfect standard of morality ; capable of great love and devotion, and equally capable of a great hate, if it should happen to come in her way. She had been for many years a nursery-maid—longer than persons will now remain in that capacity—and being well versed in the care of children, and a trusty person, had been taken by Mrs. Beaumont for the head of her nursery at Oliver's birth. Oliver was her first sole charge, and she adored him ; she taught him very many good things—cleanliness, and the habits of a little gentleman, and a certain degree of obedience, and, best of all, reverence—not only reverence religiously considered, for though that was not absent, she was not a religious woman,—but the habit of reverence, respect for whatever was to be respected, all love, and authority, and greatness, and goodness in the world.

She had this reverence in herself, and she imparted it to her charges with unconscious earnestness.

But she was very ignorant, and her morality was imperfect. She was no severe judge of many great sins, and although the most trusty of women in one sense, she was exceedingly low in her views regarding harmless lies; she would listen at a door without a thought that she was transgressing in so doing, and could she have served anybody she cared for, by telling even a great lie, she would have thought herself justified in so doing.

Mrs. Baker was on this evening awaiting Oliver's pleasure in the nursery. A king always—on this night he was to be an Emperor. If he pleased to go to bed without washing, he was to go to bed without washing; if he pleased to sit by the fire and talk, he was to sit by the fire and talk. If, after his repast downstairs, he had a crevice remaining unfilled, she had some little pastry

animals—pigs, camels, and dromedaries—with humps stuffed with currants, and such other exquisite things, awaiting him.

When Oliver came up his pleasure was to talk. He placed himself with his back to the fire, in the attitude of some gentleman he had remarked, and stood roasting himself while he addressed her.

When he was about three years old he had one day observed with childish wit that if she was a good baker she could make a bun. She had responded to the wit by making him a monster bun, which had so delighted him that ever after he called her Bun; and the name had now become her name throughout the family—so much so that a new servant had called her Mrs. Bun, to her extreme indignation.

“I say, Bun,” said Oliver, “I have had a mince-pie—a large one.”

“A little bird told me that; and how did the little bird know?”

“I suppose the bird was Janet. A very

fat bird ! I say, Bun, I think you should make her and stuff her ! She would be better than a pig ! ” And he left the fire for a moment to inspect the pastry animals.

“ What a child it is ! ” said Mrs. Baker. “ Well, Mr. Oliver, I will make her on Twelfth Night ; but we must not make it too like, for fear she should take offence. That would never do.”

“ No,” he said, laughing ; “ and she made such a good mince-pie to-night I must not laugh at her. It was capital ! No, thank you,” as she put forward a camel for the expected crevice, “ I am not hungry to-night. Put them away till to-morrow. I say, Bun,” coming to the subject that occupied him, “ I told mamma I should always have mince-pies when I grew up, and she says I can’t.”

“ Did she ? — I wonder why ? I should say ladies and gentlemen could always have mince-pies, if they like. I am sure *you* could, Mr. Oliver.”

“So I thought—but mamma says not. She says, for instance, if I am a soldier when I grow up, that I may have to go through great hardships, and particularly about food.” With the wonderful memory of a child, he had kept all her words accurately.

“But you need not be a soldier, Mr. Oliver.”

“No, I need not be a soldier, but I must be something; and I want to think about it. What is there to be? Does a sailor have to have hardships, particularly about food?”

“Poor souls! I am afraid they have—and getting up in the cold nights! You shall never be a sailor, Mr. Oliver, while I live.”

“Do *they* get up in the cold? And so does a farmer, mamma says. What else is there to be, Bun? Does a doctor get up in the cold?”

“A doctor! Bless us, Mr. Oliver, you are not going to be a doctor?”

“No, I think not; but I want to see

about it all. Mamma says I must be something ; and so does papa."

"Then it is a shame of them to say so."

"Well, Bun, I don't know that. You would not have me idle, I suppose?"

"Yes, I would, sir."

"Oh ! no, I must not be lazy and selfish. Mamma says she should not half like me if I ever was. Everybody must do something, papa says."

"I only mean idle in a certain way, Mr. Oliver. You know that great Lord Nantwich that lives out there, with the tower on his house ?"

"Yes ; and the flag."

"Well, do you call him idle ?"

"I don't know. What does he do ? Tell me about him, Bun."

As Oliver's back was now completely roasted, he pulled his little chair close to the fire, and sat down, requesting Bun to do the same. His small brain, what with his

dinner, and what with his subject, was teeming with ideas.

Mrs. Baker, having taken her seat, began her history of Lord Nantwich.

“Lord Nantwich had a father called Lord Nantwich, and *he* was his son ; and his father had a son who was Lord Nantwich, too, and so it went back for, I daresay, a thousand years, and they were all Lord Nantwiches. How they got it first I don’t well know, but I have heard that it was for some honourable thing they did which made the king pleased. And of course they had the tower, and the castle, and land as well ; and every one of them left it all to his eldest son, till it came to our Lord Nantwich, and he has it all, and is Lord Nantwich, as we know. And as he had it all, of course there was no need for him to work. No Lord Nantwich that I know of ever did work, because, you see, he had got it.”

However perplexing her tale may read

to older minds, Oliver followed it perfectly, and with great interest. At last he said,

“Yes, Bun ; but then, you know, you said Lord Nantwich is not idle. What does he do ?”

“Plenty to do, Mr. Oliver. Idle!—no, indeed. One day he has to go up to Parliament, to advise the King ; the next day he sits on the Bench, to send a murderer to prison ; the next day he opens the new bridge ; the next day he throws down a poor man’s cottage, and has it built up new for him.”

“Himself?” Oliver asked, with interest, thinking the throwing down must be fun.

“No, no—not with his hands. Lord Nantwich does a deal of work, as I hear, but it is all of his own free will, and all with his brains,” tapping her forehead. “And as he does, so must you do, Mr. Oliver.”

“But I am not going to be Lord Nantwich, am I ?” and Oliver’s large blue eyes looked perplexed.

“Not exactly; but something like it.” She nodded her head, and shook her head, and looked altogether like a person who has some great idea inside.

“Why, Bun, what am I going to be? Papa said I must be something; but he did not mean *not* to work—he meant work.”

“I don’t know what he meant; but I know what I know. Now, Mr. Oliver, if I was to tell you a great secret, should you tell?”

“Oh! no, Bun—never.”

“You must mind you don’t. Well, Mr. Oliver, I think somebody, whether he is a great lord or not, I did not catch, but somebody has left you a great large property, something like Lord Nantwich; and you are to step into it the very day you are twenty-one.”

“Really, Bun?”

His eyes were now bursting out of his head with excitement.

“As true as we sit here—you and I.”

“But how do you know? Does mamma know?”

“Oh! yes, she knows. I will tell you how I know. It was when your mamma was ill this last Spring—do you remember? —at that time when God took the new little baby that came, to be an angel?”

“Yes, I remember,” Oliver said, awed and sorrowful. With undoubting faith he had accepted the fact that it was better for the baby brother to be an angel with wings than to grow on the earth; but nevertheless he had looked forward to having a boy to play with him, and he had shed many tears at the time. At this moment he was excited with other thoughts, and though awed he did not dwell on the recollection.

“Well, your mamma and papa were in the room together, and Mrs. Greyson went out for a walk, and she asked me to lay a tray of clean linen down in the dressing-room. And I went in, and the door was partly open, and your papa read a little out

loud, and it was about this. I did not hear it all, but I could hear bits. And then your papa called very loud, 'Is any one there?' and I thought perhaps he would be angry, so I came away and I heard no more, but I am positive I heard that, Mr. Oliver."

Mrs. Baker told very nearly the whole truth, nor was she conscious that she omitted to say that on hearing the name of Oliver, her darling, she had gone very near the door to see what was plotting against him.

"Heard that I was to be some great rich man, Bun!—really that?"

"Yes, sir. A great one, and a good one too I hope, like our Lord Nantwich."

"Then of course I need not be something?"

"No, only for fun, if you like. Many young gentlemen are soldiers for fun, and sometimes other things, I suppose; but it is fun and nonsense. But now, Mr. Oliver, you must never, never tell what I have told you!"

“I never will.”

“You would get me into a terrible scrape if you did, that I can tell you.”

“I would never do such a thing, Bun.”

He spoke very earnestly, for he was a very kind little boy.

“I daresay your papa and mamma will tell you all in good time. Don’t you say a word till then.”

“Never,” he repeated sleepily, and the next moment his eyes had closed, and his head dropped.

He had been excited about the subject, but the fact did not sufficiently interest him to prevent the overpowering sleep of childhood from taking possession of him.

“Bless the child, he’s asleep!” said Mrs. Baker, and putting all questions aside, she arose to perform her usual tasks.

The operations of his disarraying in some degree aroused him, and his last words were merry.

“I wonder, Bun,” he said, as she folded

the clothes around him, “whether Lord Nantwich had a mince-pie to-night?”

“Twenty, I should think,” she replied.

“Then I think he is greedy ;” on which he dozed off, and thought no more of mince-pies or professions.

CHAPTER IV.

NOR did he think of them on his awaking. The excitement of his birthday, with possibly a touch of indigestion, had overset the equilibrium of his brain, making it more thoughtful than was his wont. He rose in the morning to his usual happy indifference about a future. Some snow had fallen ; more was expected. "If I cannot make a snow-man, perhaps I can a snow-baby," he shouted to his nurse ; and for several days he was occupied with trying to collect sufficient snow for this smaller object.

When the snow melted, some other bliss absorbed him wholly, nor did the idea of being a great man at twenty raise a picture

in the future sufficiently tangible to overmaster the present pleasure.

Nor did Mrs. Baker recur to the subject. She too had spoken under excitement. She thought it a real shame to talk to Mr. Oliver about a profession, but she was satisfied with what she had said, and was certainly very anxious not to have her revelation discovered.

When Oliver was nine, he was taken from a young woman who had hitherto instructed him, and sent to a grammar-school in the neighbourhood, returning home on Saturday to spend his Sunday at home. His master was not very severe, and as Oliver, though he gave the smallest amount of attention that was possible, had pretty good natural ability, he managed to keep out of trouble. He made no great progress, but still struggled on sufficiently to be happy. A boy who is unhappy and in scrapes will console himself with thoughts of the future; but Oliver, always good-

tempered, always popular, and not very much in disgrace with his master, was too satisfied to trouble himself about it. He had not forgotten what he had been told, but he rarely thought about it. Occasionally, if his lesson was more than usually badly said, his master would slap his head and say, "I know who will be a dunce;" and Oliver would then console himself by making a joke in his heart—"Then I shall be a *great* dunce," and laugh most heartily by himself at his wit.

When he was about eleven, Mr. Beaumont, who had hitherto taken it easily, began to fuss himself a little about Oliver and his profession. Every Monday evening he would observe to his wife,

"Well, Marion, did Oliver say anything this time?"

And the answer was invariably the same—

"Nothing about a profession. He does not think yet."

After this question had been asked her for six weeks running, Mrs. Beaumont determined to try to bring Oliver to a little talk. She could not help being herself anxious on the subject, yet she was so determined to withstand the temptation she had foreseen would assail her, that she was always on the watch against her anxiety.

On the Sunday morning, Dorothy was not well, and Mr. Beaumont went straight from Church to speak to a gentleman who lived in a contrary direction. Mrs. Beaumont and Oliver walked home alone. When they had walked a little way, she asked him if he remembered the text. Both Oliver and his sister knew that this question would be asked in the course of the day. Dorothy hardly ever failed to answer, but Oliver, though sincerely desirous to do so, could rarely attain his object; something, as he said, always "came funny" at that moment, and put it out of his head.

On this day, however, something in the

text itself had caught his fancy, and, pleased with his memory, he gave it out with great pomp—

“ ‘ Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.’ ”

The sermon had been a useful, practical discourse on the need of spirit and industry, both in our earthly and our heavenly business.

“ Good boy !” said his mother, warmly ; and now, as you have remembered that so well, perhaps you can remember something in the sermon ?”

Oliver loved praise ; he did not dislike a little flattery, but real, honest praise was both pleasant to him and useful to him. He was anxious now to gain a little more, and the rather because he remembered there *had* been something which had impressed his mind, but which, unfortunately, had put into his head a dispute about a ball, and this had occupied him till the sermon was over. He walked along, trying to

catch at that thought which had put the other thought into his head. At last he found it.

“I remember, mamma, the man—the gentleman—the clergyman—said that, even in the midst of their sports and pastimes, people ought to remember that they are—” Oliver quoted so far pretty accurately, but here he paused, for he was a modest, reverend boy, and disliked using holy words. The conclusion had been “children of God, doing their father’s business.” After a pause he concluded with a flat “good,” not being able to think of any other variation.

“Yes, that is just what he said,” said his mother, pleased; “and can you remember anything further?”

“No, mamma, that is all,” he replied, decidedly, for he knew well that at that very point his mind had gone off on its excursion, the words “sports and pastimes” being tantalizing to the imagination.

“The reason I ask you is, because a part of the sermon made me think of you.”

“Did it? What could it be?”

“It was towards the end. He said everybody in the world had some special work laid out for them; they ought to see what it was, and try to do it. I thought when he said it, Oliver, that you, too, will have some special work to do. What will it be?”

“I wonder, mamma!” and he said the words with such unfeigned wondering that Mrs. Beaumont felt baffled. She was not a clever woman, and having laid her little plan for drawing Oliver into conversation, no new thought, when thus baffled, occurred to help her.

Oliver had seen no plan, and had not intended to baffle. He thought perhaps something was coming, but as nothing came, his thoughts took a new turn, and after they had walked a little way in silence, he suddenly burst out laughing.

"I was thinking, mamma, that, when I was a little boy, I used to think that the clergyman lived in the church, and did so wonder where he put his bed on a Sunday."

Mrs. Beaumont smiled ; but then, being a mother who was always on the watch to slide in a good thought, she told him that his idea at one time used very nearly to be true ; that in the old time holy men used to sleep very near the church, and almost make the church their home ; and that little boys were brought up living close to the church, having their business to light the candles, and take care of the things used in the various services.

"Like Samuel ?" Oliver said, with interest.

"Yes, my dear boy," his mother said, in a pleased voice ; adding, "And how should you like such a life, Oliver ?"

"Not much, mamma. I am afraid I should very soon be tired of living in a church."

“ Is there anything that would tire you less ? ” Mrs. Beaumont quite hated herself for thus endeavouring to surprise him into an expression of a wish, but the words arose, and she spoke them.

“ Well, mamma, talking and laughing—I don’t think I shall ever be tired of that.”

When Mrs. Beaumont repeated to her husband this, not tame, perhaps, but impotent conclusion to her endeavours to make something out of Oliver, Mr. Beaumont cried, “ Oh, the rascal ! ” and laughed so loudly and so long, that the mother felt assured that, for a time, at least, she and Oliver would be left in peace.

When he was past thirteen, he was sent to the public school at Shrewsbury. The night before he went, his father spoke to him seriously. This was rarely the case ; he left all that to his mother. When he wished him good night, he said,

“ Now I have a word to say, Oliver ; I am sending you to a good school, and we

are putting ourselves to expense to do it. You must make the most of your time. The little fellows" (there were young twins) "will be growing up some day, and you must get on well before them."

"Oh, yes, papa!" Oliver felt slightly offended; he was eight years older than the twins.

"Yes; but I say, Oliver, you must look sharp. There's a future coming, and you must make yourself fit for it."

"Yes, papa."

"Yes, yes—but yes, papa, is not enough. There's many a boy who is making his way in the world at your age. I don't want that; but you must begin to be thinking—you must look sharp, Mr. Oliver. Do you hear what I say?"

"Yes, papa."

The extreme vagueness of this conversation caused it to leave no impression whatever on Oliver's mind. Mr. Beaumont thought he had spoken well, because he

spoke authoritatively ; and Mrs. Beaumont thought the same ; but as Oliver always intended to look sharp, and grow up before his brothers, he felt in no degree affected by the discourse.

He went on at Shrewsbury just as he had done at the Grammar-School—merry and popular ; often in little scrapes, but never in great ones ; doing well enough, but never very well ; and in the holidays he was the same—always busy about some boyish amusement, so that, although she watched and watched, Mrs. Beaumont could never *surprise* him into a serious talk ; and on the occasions when she did instruct him seriously in religious knowledge, seeming so childish, so joyous, so impassive, that it was out of place to bring in reflections upon an earthly future.

At the end of rather more than a year, when he was approaching fifteen, Mr. Beaumont observed,

“ I say, Marion, something must be done.

Oliver must begin to think of something. Suppose you write to Mr. —, and ask him to be so good as to give us his views on Oliver's character. We must look sharp, I say."

In obedience to her husband, Mrs. Beaumont wrote to the head-master. It was a maternal letter, entering fully into her anxieties about Oliver, expressing the wish of his parents that he should choose a profession, and asking advice on the subject. The head-master had many such letters ; but he was a kind man, and although his answers might not be always satisfactory, he answered them all. His letter to Mrs. Beaumont was not long, but it was so far satisfactory that it expressed an opinion. He said Oliver was a well-conducted boy, with good abilities, but so very young for his age that it was almost as difficult to say for what he was fit as if he was ten years old. In his opinion it was better to leave him at school, where he was doing well, and

to let his future destiny alone for the present. "I am no great lover," he said in conclusion, "of precocious boys ; and though I own that your son is singularly boyish, I might say childish, for his age, I have not found that such characters are less useful in the world, when the childish things are once left behind."

Mrs. Beaumont was tolerably satisfied with the letter. She was accustomed to lean on the opinions of others—more especially on the opinions of those who spoke hopefully regarding Oliver ; and she thought the head-master must know what was best.

Mr. Beaumont was not so well satisfied. He was beginning to be very anxious on the point, and to feel thwarted. He was not often cross, but he was very near being cross when the letter came.

"It's all very well, Marion," he said, "but the man don't know what we know. Leave the future alone with all my heart, if you can—but there's the row ;—we can't."

“We can for the present,” she said. “He means that Oliver will choose more wisely in a year or two.”

“Hang the wisdom!—we don’t want it. But I wash my hands of it,” and he made a violent demonstration with his arms. “You must undertake it, Marion. I leave it to you. He’s your son, and you are his mother.”

In her heart Mrs. Beaumont was more anxious than her husband. A woman in such a case is sure to be so. The older Oliver grew—the nearer came the hope—the more did it possess itself of her mind. But though she could not help the anxiety, she had determined it should not govern her, and she now replied,

“Well, leave it to me for a year or two. Oliver is not much more of a man than Robin is at this moment; but it will soon be different. We have asked advice—let us take it.”

Mr. Beaumont made no answer; but he

accepted the principle of the last words, and, glad to put the responsibility back into the hands from which he had for a short time taken it, went off to his bullocks.

CHAPTER V.

THERE came to Shrewsbury School a boy who took a great fancy to Oliver Beaumont. His name was Frank Vaughan. Frank Vaughan was two years younger than Oliver, but more than his equal in attainments. He was a clever boy, and a steady, persevering boy ; and though originally placed in a form below Oliver, he had, after one half, been placed with him, and was at the top of the class, while Oliver was nearer the bottom. But fancies are not always guided by intellectual attainments, nor even by similar tastes, and Frank Vaughan looked up to Oliver with sincere admiration. What he admired it would be hard to say, for

admiration was a very large word to use towards a character like Oliver's, but the word was true. Frank loved him with a boy's ardent love, and admired him, though perhaps he could not himself have told why.

They had made acquaintance during the half when Frank was in a different form, and the mutual fancy had been felt. In the next half the fancy became a warm friendship. It was over the fire in the Winter nights that the friendship was firmly compounded and cemented; and when Easter drew near, Frank one day said,

"I wish you would go home with me for the holidays. It would be so jolly!"

"I should like it, of all things," Oliver said; "but how would your father like it? Have you asked him?"

"Not yet, because I only thought of it this morning. I shall, of course—but I know he will like it. My father is not at all *that* sort of person."

"But, I say, Vaughan," and Oliver looked

thoughtful, "I thought you told me your father was poor."

"I know I did—that is why I work so hard. I know it is all he can do to send me here, and I should not be worth two-pence if I did not do my best."

"My father is not rich," Oliver said ; "but not quite that, perhaps—and, besides—"

This was an enigmatical speech addressed to a little prick of conscience, and Frank Vaughan took no notice of it. He only replied,

"Say yes, Beaumont."

"What I was going to say," Oliver began again, "is that I am rather an awful kind of person to have in the way of appetite. My mother says she would rather have a troop of dragoons to a leg of mutton than me."

"My father won't mind," Frank said, laughing.

"Oh ! but I mean what I say. She says she is sure, if Snowdon was made of plum-

pudding, that I could eat it all on a Sunday."

"I don't think we often have plum-pudding, but I am sure we will, if you like it, and the more you eat the better."

"We don't always have it either, but it is all the same. If Snowdon was Stilton cheese, I should eat it."

"And I am sure my father would say you were welcome to eat it; he likes people to enjoy themselves, and we all have great appetites. Come, Beaumont, don't talk nonsense—do come."

"Well, if you really think he won't mind having a person like the giant in 'Jack and the Beanstalk,' I will write and ask home, and you had better do the same."

Both answers were favourable. Mrs. Beaumont, though sorry to lose her son's company, was always glad that he should see something besides the bullocks of his own home, and this was not an easy thing to manage. She gave a willing consent.

Frank's letter was from his sister. She said her father would be very glad to see "a fellow"—the words were quoted from Frank—and more particularly glad to see Oliver Beaumont, as he found he was a sort of cousin. He hoped Frank would say how very welcome he would be.

"You see, Beaumont," Frank said, giving him the letter. "But how do you come to be a cousin? That's news!"

"And much more than I can explain. Somehow I never studied my genealogical tree. I wonder where your father found it out?"

"I don't know. I don't know my tree either. That letter is from my sister."

"So I see—Rosamond."

"She is such a jolly girl! I think you will like her."

Oliver was a little scared at the word. His quiet, pensive mother and shy sister Dorothy had formed his ideal of woman-kind, and he held a jolly girl—for he had

seen such—in profound abhorrence. For a moment he made no reply; then, thinking it was better to forewarn, he observed,

“I don’t like jolly girls in general.”

“I think you will like her. She is really, though she is my sister, so out-and-out jolly.”

Internally, Oliver shuddered; but having made known his opinion once, he thought it unnecessary to say anything further on the subject. He made, however, a few other inquiries regarding Frank’s family, wishing to make himself at home, more or less, before his arrival among them.

Mr. Vaughan was still the Rector of the parish on the borders of Herefordshire and Wales. His circumstances were unchanged, with the great exception that his wife was dead. She had died four years before the present date of the story. Mr. Vaughan had £600 a year—£200 a year of private income, and £400 from his living. On this he was, in the eyes of those about him,

“passing rich,” for he did a great deal with it.

There is a cant phrase of this day that speaks of Nature’s noblemen. Mr. Vaughan was one. A lover of order and beauty, a lover of liberality and hospitality, an ardent lover of charity ; not an enthusiast, for he had good sense and good taste, and rock-like principles, controlling every act and mood, but born with a hand and heart open as day to melting charity—to that large charity which embraces rich and poor, mind and bodies, the silent and the crying wants of human nature.

With these tastes he had married. As a young curate with £200 a year of private income he had been rich. But he fell in love while still a young curate, and married ; married, as such men usually do, where there is no dowry, and left riches behind him for ever.

His wife was beautiful, and as like himself as could well be, but she had nothing but her

intrinsic merit to bestow upon him. The two young people—he was twenty-five and she was nineteen—looked the future in the face steadily and calmly; not with the eye of romance, which supposes that love will support under all trials if cares should arise, but with the eye of wisdom, which knows that an income of £300 a year must produce cares of poverty, and that although love will support, love will also add trials all its own.

They looked it in the face, and decided that to be bound together was worth every care and every sacrifice that poverty could bring.

They married, and began life on the lowest possible scale, living in lodgings without any servant; but on a scale which, though devoid of ambitious views, was not devoid of beauty and charity. Mr. Vaughan could not live without bestowing; in his plan of life a bestowing was calculated on as necessary, and his wife was like him. Charity, large for their means, was made a part of their

daily life, and for this charity there was sufficient. Mr. Vaughan was also a man who could not live without order, neatness, and beauty—the beauty that comes from neatness and order ; and his wife was like him. What they had, lowly and humble as its scale might be, was perfect in its kind.

Even when, in four years, two children came, there was no great change in this respect. There was more self-denial, there was more care, there was more planning ; but the same peace and charity and order and beauty still characterized their home. There followed a short sad time, when Mrs. Vaughan began to lose her health. The cares which had been delights became pains. She struggled bravely, but man's body, though it will do much at the command of man's mind, will not do all things. Courage and energy can do much, but for his good man must know that he is dust, and there are times when the frail body will not obey the will. That time came to Mrs. Vaughan.

She had not strength to put a crooked thing straight, to fill a glass with flowers, to see that the humble dinner was proudly served. She was not stricken down, but she was incapable of exertion, and the change was sadly and bitterly felt.

But both husband and wife did what they could. They submitted, and submitted with cheerful submission ; and that cheerful submission bore them through. Something of order and beauty vanished ; some deeper cares of poverty were felt, but peace and hope remained in their minds and in their home, and that peace brought a holier beauty to the abode than before.

The time was short ; for suddenly and unexpectedly, while his wife was still passing her sad day in prostrate weakness, a beam of sunshine fell. A gentleman who had a living vacant, met Mr. Vaughan at some public meeting, sat near him, made his acquaintance, was struck by the singular mixture of ardour and quietness, of enthu-

siasm and sense, which characterized him, and the very day after his acquaintance offered him the living on the borders of Herefordshire and Wales, where he now resided.

Thither they removed, and there they led a happy life for several years. Mrs. Vaughan never regained her early strength—there was the drawback; but when she saw that weak health was to be her fate in life, she contemplated the fact, and arranged accordingly.

The plans which had guided their first outset in life guided them still. Self-denial and carefulness in the plan of living; but order and beauty in what that plan allowed. A tenth set apart for charity, as sacredly as if it was a divine ordinance, and as much liberality and charity besides as two willing hearts could give. From the first year of their marriage, a small sum had been put away for education; and this rule—though it was a larger

or smaller sum, according to circumstances —was never infringed. But with this exception, the income received was cheerfully spent ; and a large trust in God was exercised regarding the future.

After the removal to Glenowen, one other child only was born, and of the three children two were girls. This made the plan of life easier than it would have been with a large family ; and although the health of Mrs. Vaughan was a source of expense, her mental qualities, and her cheerful abstinence from pleasures and luxuries that some might have thought necessary, counterbalanced this trouble. Her husband, indeed—a man who would have sacrificed a finger to save a stranger's pain—grieved inwardly over the self-denials she was forced to exercise ; but luckily he did not fully know what they were. A man, strong and healthy, has no power to feel like an invalid woman ; and she took care that he should never know the vain longings for change of air and

scene, and luxuries beyond their means, which at times possessed her.

In brightness, order, peace, and joy, the children grew up in their quiet home, until Rosamond, the eldest, was twelve years old. When she was twelve years old, her mother suddenly faded and died. It had been the prayer of Mrs. Vaughan's life that she might live until Rosamond was fit to take her place, and that when she died, her death, not for her own sake, but for the sake of that home which she had so loved to keep orderly and bright, might be peaceful and calm.

Both prayers were granted—Rosamond was fit to follow her steps; and her illness lasted but for a week. Beyond the fact that it was illness, and to be followed by death, it was a painless and peaceful one. She simply faded—her mind clear, her spirit happy—day by day, till the frail thread snapped, and she dropped asleep.

One day—a day or two before her death

—she spoke to Rosamond about her husband. She did not suffer his welfare to be a care, but she made provision for him as she could.

“Do not grieve for me overmuch,” she said. “Remember that I have had a happy life, and that now I go with hope and trust to Him who has led me all my life-long. I know you will miss me, and I would stay with you all if I might; but as I must not, I know it is best so; and I leave you, with hope and thankfulness, in His hands.”

Rosamond did not answer. It was the approach of her first grief, and though she did not in the least realize what was about to happen, what it would be to be without her mother, there was the horror of a great dread upon her. She was scared more than sorrowful; her nerves were frozen rather than shaken. She gazed with a look that spoke, and yet knew not what it said. Her mother understood it, however, and waiting a moment for some sound of reply, went on:

“I know you will miss me, my darling child. I do not wish you not to do so, nor ask you not to do so. We have all been very happy together, and now, for a time, that happiness will be disturbed. The happy past is gone. Thank God that it was so happy! But now, dearest, a new life will begin; and I wish it to be happy also—God grant it may be so!”

Still Rosamond did not speak. Her mother’s words were, as has been a phrase since Shakespere’s time, “Greek to her.” She could not put herself forward into the time to come, or understand what it was her mother said. Yet Rosamond was a girl whose mind and character were beyond her years. It was excess of thought and feeling that made her now stupid and dumb.

Her mother looked into her eyes, which were fixed on her with a piteous gaze, and gently touched her hand. The touch of those thin, wan fingers pressing upon her startled Rosamond. She sprang up.

“ What is it, mamma ?”

“ Nothing, darling. Sit down again, I have more to say ; but I want your mind, Rosamond—I want to speak to you of your father. When I am gone, you must be to him wife and child both. Do you understand ?”

“ Oh, mamma !” and Rosamond shivered. A gleam of light, of dreary light, fell on the future, and she shrank from it. But Mrs. Vaughan saw that understanding was coming to her.

“ What I mean to say, my dearest, is this : Happiness is in the hands of God. He may please to withhold it altogether ; but much more is in our power than we think. Often God blesses, and man makes misery. It has been the joy of my life to make others happy, as far as in my power lay, and, above all, to make your father happy. He could not live—I do not think he *could* live in a gloomy home. I do not know how it would be——” She paused, and her

eyes gazed vacantly and wistfully before her ; then she recollected herself, and said, “I do not know how it would be ; it is not for me to think ; but I do not think he could be what he is, if all was not bright and orderly and peaceful about him. Happiness is not in our hands, but peace is. Do you at all understand me, Rosamond ?” she said, pausing abruptly, and with a gasp.

She had spoken rapidly, almost volubly, on a subject that lay near her heart, but it had exhausted her ; her cheek became more wan, and her eyes fixed for a moment.

Suddenly Rosamond saw and felt all that was coming upon her. There are many definite moments of conversion and change, and this moment converted the child into a woman. She had hitherto been cared for and cherished by her mother ; suddenly she became as a mother to her mother. Softly and calmly she stooped over her, and kissed her, saying,

“I think I do understand. Do not speak

more, mamma ; I will think of it all, and I will try to be as like you as ever I can."

The livid shade passed from Mrs. Vaughan's face, and she looked up at her daughter and smiled. It was not the words that affected her and gave her a sense of peace ; it was the change in Rosamond. She *felt* her protecting power in every sensitive fibre of her failing body, and yielded to it. She knew that, as far as in her lay, Rosamond was to be trusted with the care of the loved home she had to leave. She laid her hand on hers, and presently said,

" I have written down, at many times, looking to this hour, bits of advice. You will find them in my work-box. Do not look for them now, for they will make you smile. They are little things—homely things ; but life is made of little things, and they are the small joys, dearest, that make a happy life."

There was not much more said, for Mrs. Vaughan, feeling that this blessing had been

added—that her daughter understood her
—rolled this care also from her mind, and
breathed her last in perfect peace.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Oliver Beaumont first saw Rosamond Vaughan, he was a boy of fifteen—the most boyish, not to say childish, of boys. When Rosamond first saw Oliver, she was a girl of past sixteen—a girl more mature in mind and manner than most women of twenty-five. Between the two there was an enormous gulf.

Rosamond Vaughan was a singular person—singular in this, that she had so many gifts and so many charms, and that there was so little to counterbalance the charm. It was impossible not to feel that she was that much-disliked thing—a superior being; it was difficult not to feel that her amiable character approached towards that much-

dreaded word, perfection ; yet the sensation produced was one that was altogether soothing and charming, and not at all overpowering.

She was singular also in another point. She had as much work on her hands as an emperor, and yet she never seemed overbusy—had always leisure for the concerns of others, however small.

She was most singular of all perhaps in the fact that nothing seemed small in her eyes. Perhaps her mother's words, "They are the small joys that make a happy life," had eaten themselves into her soul ; for she would give as much zeal and heart to the making of a good cake for her sister's birthday as to the sending out of a missionary. Not that she had anything to do with missionaries, or that, if she had, there was any want of perception in her mind of the difference between converting a heathen man and making a child for an hour happy ; but only that in its place and degree one was as

important as the other—not one small and the other large, but both in their place equal.

Rosamond Vaughan's business was great. It was all confined to one small parish and one small home; yet her works were many. Her first duty was the care of the house. To arrange all things with economy, and yet with that neatness and order and beauty and liberality which had been so dear to her mother's heart. To do this requires exceeding thought and care. Some do not think it worth the trouble. The Vaughans thought otherwise. Her second duty was the education of her sister. Laura was nine years old; and with the help of her father, and of occasional persons sought out and found by careful watching, Rosamond was her governess. But the education of her sister assisted Rosamond in her third duty to herself. Her principles could not allow her brain to lie fallow; nor could she, with a quiet conscience, neglect the intellectual gifts that were in her. For heart and mind

and soul she was always striving after perfection, and could not be content to neglect the talents that had been entrusted to her care.

Her duties to her father and brother were more simple. They consisted in dutiful love and reverend sympathy to the one, and love and hearty sympathy to the other. Her father consulted her in all points ; and Frank called her a jolly girl, because no concern of his, whether of sport or study, failed to awake her whole interest.

Besides the cares of home, there were the cares of the parish. She put her home first—that was where she was placed, and her first duty was there. But on her hands also lay all the joys and sorrows of those around her. She was the friend of the prosperous ; the consoler and visitor of the sick ; a kind of young mother to all the boys and girls of the place ; encouraging by a smile of praise, controlling by a sad grave look. She was the principal dispenser of

her father's large and wise charity. This was a charity not entirely confined to his own parish, but which strove to bring his parish into connexion with the world, as occasion occurred, stirring up his people and himself to make an offering to a world's needs.

On Rosamond, also, lay not entirely, but in a great degree, the musical instruction of the children who formed the choir. Mr. Vaughan had great taste, and even in his earliest curacy had endeavoured to raise the tone of the services in which he took part. As time went on, his views and taste improved, and the public worship of his parish was conducted with the order, and beauty, and reverence which belongs, where it is possible to have it, to sacred things. But he had no musical knowledge—that is to say, he had not had it, and found it at his date of life uphill work. He procured the occasional assistance of a good organist, who came from a distance, to instruct Rosamond,

to instruct the choir, and to endeavour to instruct a young schoolmaster ; but on Rosamond fell the government of the whole—she had the responsibility. It was on her that the sympathising eyes of the whole congregation turned if there was a failure.

Nor were these all Rosamond's duties. Among the homely bits of advice left by her mother had been two special charges. The one was, by a careful culture of the garden, to have flowers constantly on the tables ; and the other was that she and her sister should always be neatly dressed. The care of the garden had been one very dear to Mrs. Vaughan. She looked at it, as, indeed, she did all things, religiously ; she said the beauty of flowers was a gift of God, which reason and philosophy would not have supposed necessary. The trees might have had leaves for shelter, and fruit for man's use, without that radiant glory and beauty which flowers give to the world. She said they were such a visible emblem of the

goodness of God that she could hardly understand a despairing soul considering them and retaining his despair. It was from them she drew all those lessons regarding the duty of neatness, and order, and refinement, and cheerfulness which made a portion of her religion.

In her early days she had herself worked, even toiled, in her garden. She had done, as it is related that Queen Charlotte had done in her girlhood—she had devoted it to the poor. She had had little money to give, but she had worked hard, and with her vegetables and flowers had gladdened many an invalid's heart. After her marriage, other cares and failing health had prevented this employment; but when the new home, where there was an excellent garden, was made, she began to instil her own peculiar thoughts into those about her.

Rosamond had never taken much to the garden-work. To see the flowers was a delight; to help others in working or arranging

was a pleasure ; but her natural taste did not lead her to a garden, and as a child she had never wished to have one. It was otherwise with her father and the younger ones. Mr. Vaughan, and Frank, and Laura worked, not like amateurs, but with real labour—with minds and bodies assisting the man who assisted them.

Frank and Laura had large portions allotted to them, and they managed their allotments as the villagers managed theirs—indeed, with the success usually attending young gardeners, even more successfully. They were often the first in the neighbourhood with their peas and potatoes, and sent their produce to market, as others did. Half their gains were set apart for charity, the other half they retained, not for themselves, for they inherited the liberal disposition of their parents, but for the wants of the passing hour. While Frank was at school, Laura, with the assistance of some favoured boy from the choir, managed his

garden. When he came home, he worked for himself, and for her, and his father, and often for the villagers also ; he was strong and expert, and an hour from Mr. Frank was looked on as a great boon by the women and children around.

After her mother's death, Rosamond gave her attention to the garden as a duty. The attention of her mind, not of her body ; for though healthy she was not strong, and the manual labour, which was a delight to the others, tired her. But she learned the times and seasons for flowers, the simple rules for successful culture, and, by a little attention, the plants most fitted to the soil. It flourished as much under her care as under her mother's, and there were few times in the year when the vases and flower-pots were empty.

The other charge regarding dress was more to Rosamond's taste. It might have been too much so. She had an aunt, a widow-lady, whose mind had been early

saddened, who failed to take that cheerful view of life and godliness which characterized her brother's family. This aunt occasionally visited at Glenowen, and the neatness and prettiness of the establishment, and especially of Rosamond's dress, was a bitter pang to her. She did penance for it with many secret tears. Many pieces of advice she gave to Rosamond on the subject, and although she could not bring her over to her views, her advice was useful to her niece. It made her watchful—it set her on her guard ; it perhaps prevented the touch of evil on thoughts that were in their origin altogether good.

But, in truth, although the care of her own and her sister's dress took a good deal of time, and although the anxiety to have it always neat, and as pretty as circumstances permitted, took a little thought, the ceaseless self-denial required by the opposition of Rosamond's taste to her principles and circumstances, gave her a practical help

in disciplining herself which was very valuable. In her father and mother the love of beauty had been developed only in its simplest forms ; but the taste of Rosamond seemed to have been born cultivated. In art, in architecture, in music, in dress, in whatsoever requires knowledge, as well as love, she seemed to be born with it ; born with the knowledge as well as the love. Although, therefore, she lived happily and contentedly in her quiet home, it was the contentment of a sweet disposition and a resolved will, not the contentment of satisfaction. She longed to adorn her father's church ; she longed for the rich harmonies she heard in her dreams, to be floating about it ; she longed for money to carry out the aspiring thoughts and visions she had. In a degree, also, she longed for more of art and beauty in her home, and though perhaps it will be thought a touch of weakness in her character, she sometimes longed for more of beauty in her dress.

But she had the care of her father's money, and she was the dispenser of his charities, and not her rigid aunt herself could have excluded more rigidly every thought of self-indulgence than Rosamond did from her mind.

Some characters best introduce themselves—some can be described in two words; but some seem to require an introduction, and it has been so with Rosamond Vaughan. And there is one thing more to be said about her, as it is of importance in the story. She was a dreamer—she had dreams, especially one dream of charity, so strong and so defined that, in a less sensible person, it might have been supposed to show a disturbance in the intellect.

When a very little girl, she saw her father and mother watch over a child, a cripple. He did not belong to her father's parish, but the melancholy nature of the case had excited his attention. The family was large, and the family was poor, and this one child, maimed

in limbs and delicate in health, was tossed about among the various members. Not without love, but without the care and gentleness he so greatly needed.

Mrs. Vaughan had been deeply touched with the case, and often spoke of it before her little girl, encouraging the child to give up her toys for the boy's sake.

"Oh, mamma," Rosamond said one day, when she was eight years old, "if ever I am rich I shall build a home for little cripple boys."

She spoke with her whole heart, and Mrs. Vaughan, instead of saying as some would have done, "I am afraid you will never be rich enough for that," entered into the fancy as a possible thing, though with a smile on her face, and talked it over with her.

"I believe," she said in the course of their talk, "that children do have consolations grown-up people do not have; they see Heaven more clearly, and trust more in a Father's love. But still when I

see a child suffer, I feel more than at other times what it was Adam brought into the world, and what it was our Lord came down to help."

She often spoke like this to the child, whose earnest eyes drank in all she said ; on this occasion her words became engraven on Rosamond's soul.

During the years of happy childhood they took root, but did not shoot. But after her mother's death, Rosamond had many lonely hours. Frank went to school ; Laura was young ; her father was busy. As she sat at work she dreamed dreams, not of castles of happiness, but a particular castle of charity, which, recurring again and again, became a tangible occupant of her mind.

After a time, as she sat with her father, she spoke to him of her plan. He, feeling that it was good for a young mind to soar out of the small sphere which it was destined to inhabit, entered into the dreamy thought, and directed her to studies which harmonized

with the fancies that occupied her. And thus it was she had a dream, a waking dream, a tangible fancy, of which hereafter more will be said.

She and Laura were standing in the garden, awaiting the arrival of Frank and Oliver. It was a fine, but not a Summer-like Easter. Laura was a pretty little girl of nine ; she had only the common prettiness of a child—fresh colour, bright chestnut hair, and blue eyes ; but though only a common prettiness, it was striking from its sunny glow. Rosamond was different. If Laura was sunny, Rosamond had a kind of twilight softness about her. Her skin was soft, the colour in her cheeks was soft, her grey eyes were large and soft and gentle ; her brown hair, though with plenty of light and shade, had a soft look—no touch of the chestnut that was in Frank and Laura. Yet though her beauty was all of this subdued and gentle kind, her slight figure was dignified, and her head was put on her shoulders with

that peculiar air that is called the look of a Queen. It was the union of softness and dignity that made her appearance so peculiarly attractive. She and Laura were dressed alike; gowns and jackets of a kind of blue serge, with little straw hats ornamented with one blue bow. The gowns had seen a good deal of wear, and had been uncostly in the beginning; but they were beautifully made by herself, and had been, and were still, tasteful and becoming.

“What do you expect Beaumont to be like?” Laura asked, speaking of her brother’s friend, although a young gentleman of fifteen, in the familiar style with which young ladies speak of their brother’s friends.

“I expect him to be unlike anything we ever saw before,” Rosamond replied, mysteriously.

“Do you indeed? Why?” and Laura opened wide her eyes.

Rosamond smiled, then exclaimed,

“Here they are!” as a trot was heard.

Mr. Vaughan did not keep a carriage. An enterprising man in the village saved his neighbours all such troubles by keeping two vehicles which were called chays—one open and one shut—and two strong little ponies, which appeared to consider pace and distance a matter of no importance, and were equally docile with all drivers. Frank was now rattling along with Oliver, and the boxes of both, in the open chay.

He sprang out, and brought Oliver into the garden to his sisters.

“Papa is obliged to be out,” Rosamond said to Oliver. “He was very sorry not to be able to be at home to meet you.”

She held out her hand to him, and it was like the greeting of a princess to a child, so stately, yet so courteous. Not from any assumption on Rosamond’s part, but because of the enormous distance there chanced to be between this girl of sixteen and the boy a year younger.

Oliver felt it, and blushed with the intense blush of boyish shyness. He was not in general shy. So beloved at home, so popular at school, the one who was always the king of his company, Oliver had never thought of being shy, nor ever yet had thought of his manners. Nor indeed had he much considered what he should meet at Frank's home, beyond the fact that there would be a jolly girl, whom he might perhaps get on with, but never could like. But suddenly he felt a demand upon his manners, and a doubt whether he had any. He blushed, and stammered, and said he was sure he had not expected to see Mr. Vaughan.

“ But papa would have wished to meet you,” Rosamond said, “ for he is so glad you are come. He would be glad to see any friend of Frank's; but he is particularly glad to have you here, because, you see, he finds you are a *real* relation; and we have

not very many. Did you know of this?"

"Yes," blushing and stammering still—
"Vaughan told me."

"Do you call Frank, Vaughan?" Rosamond asked, laughing. She was sorry for the boy, who seemed uneasy.

"Of course he does," Frank said, with a little impatience, not quite liking to see Oliver blush before his sisters; "just as I call him Beaumont."

"But indeed you must not call him Vaughan here," she continued, addressing herself in the same kindly manner to Oliver. "It would not do at all—it would sound so stranger-like. You must call him Frank here."

"I will," Oliver said, beginning to recover himself, and feeling a desire to gratify the beautiful young lady who stood before him, "if you will call me Oliver."

"I certainly will, if you like it."

"I should like it particularly," said Oliver. If he had been told the evening before

that he would "particularly like" a girl of sixteen to call him Oliver, he would have scoffed at the idea. But so it was now. Rosamond Vaughan had cast a spell over him.

As they walked in the garden, Rosamond asked him if Frank had told him how it was the fact of their relationship had been discovered?

"I did not know," Frank replied. "How was it?"

"A poor woman asked papa to try to get the register of her baptism. He found she belonged to the place where his grandmother lived, and where, though she did not grow up, his mother was born. It is only thirty miles from here; and you know, Frank, papa has been always meaning to go, and never finding the time. However, he did go for this purpose, and there he found your name," turning to Oliver. "On his grandmother's tomb he saw that she was the daughter of Oliver Beaumont, of Bloom-

fields. When he came home, he asked for a letter of Frank's, in which he had said a good deal about you, and found that you were Oliver Beaumont, of Bloomfields, also. I daresay it is countrified," she added, smiling, "to think about a distant relationship; but we have few relations."

"Hardly any," observed Laura, ruefully, speaking for the first time. It was a subject near her heart. She was very happy at home; but when she read stories about large families, and multitudes of cousins, she did wish to herself that in that respect her lot had been different.

The melancholy tone made all laugh, and Rosamond went on—

"Yes, hardly any; and so we were excited at the idea of a new cousin coming to see us, however distant he might be."

"How distant is it?" Oliver said. He also liked the idea of being cousin to Rosamond Vaughan.

"I believe in Scotland it would be called

very near," she replied, laughing. "In Wales I suppose it has something to do with uncles and aunts; but whether you are our great-great Welsh uncle, or we are your great Welsh aunts, my brain has not been able to calculate."

"I think it is very odd we did not know before," Oliver observed, becoming more at his ease. "My mother and father are very busy, and almost always live at home; I suppose that is the reason."

"And that has been the reason with us; and with us there was another reason, for my great-grandmother died when papa's mother was a baby, and she lived with some relations of her father's. I don't think anything was ever said or done to connect her with the Beaumonts. I fancy," and she turned her kindly, gracious smile on Oliver, "that this is the first meeting of the families that has taken place in a hundred years; and so no wonder papa was distressed that he could not meet you."

When Frank followed Oliver to his room at night, he said,

“ How do you like them ? She is a jolly girl, isn’t she ? ”

“ I should never think of using such a word,” Oliver said, with warmth.

“ Oh ! I don’t mean jolly in that sort of way. I only mean jolly.”

This first meeting of Oliver and Rosamond Vaughan left an impression on his mind that never was effaced. He had seen various types of women, and had early chosen that quiet, pensive type which his mother and sister represented ; but hitherto he had never seen a woman of the princess order—those fewer and rarer specimens of human nature—and he was dazzled by the one he now saw. There came into his nature a totally new feeling—the feeling that looks up, putting itself entirely aside ; conscious of inferiority, yet exalted rather than humiliated by the consciousness. Perhaps adoration is the only word that describes the kind of sensation ;

but the word would be too strong for anything, at that time, in Oliver's nature. She awed him in a degree, and made him think of his manners, and his tidiness, and some things that had hitherto taken care of themselves ; but it was a pleasure to be in her presence. His eyes followed her ; his ears waited to hear her speak.

CHAPTER VII.

AS soon as Easter was fully come, the Vaughan family devoted their energies to amuse Oliver. Nor was it a difficult task. There was a fine river in the neighbourhood, and there were fine hills to clamber over, and the two boys, with Laura occasionally for a companion, amused themselves to their heart's content. They returned home in time to devote one or two hours to working in the gardens, which at this moment required the care of all the owners, and Oliver enjoyed this part of the day almost more than all the rest. Laura, and sometimes Mr. Vaughan, worked, but Rosamond only sat by. Frank had made a kind of bower for her, looking west, where, even in this

early time of the year, she might sit, protected from the cold winds, and catching such sun as was to be had. There she had often before sat and knitted while they worked, and there she sat now; and the conversation was often merry, and if conversation flagged, there was music to enliven them. For Rosamond had had too much practice in teaching the young villagers not to be able to impart some knowledge to her brother and sister, and the open-air part-singing of the family was, for its humble kind, very good. Oliver had a strong voice, which promised some day to be a fine one, and in the evenings Rosamond instructed him to bear a part in their garden concerts. His failures and his successes alike caused merriment, and altogether Oliver enjoyed his afternoons and evenings with all his heart. There *was* something of heart in it —a very boyish, but very true sentiment.

On this visit of Oliver's there is no need to dwell. Only two conversations of any

importance took place—one was with Mr. Vaughan, and will be spoken of; the other was with Rosamond.

Oliver was one morning awaiting Frank, who had some business on hand before they set off together on their excursion. He sat in the drawing-room with Rosamond; she was occupied with a great book of accounts, but with her pen in her hand, good-naturedly suspended her occupations to listen to him.

Rosamond had not failed to see the boyish sentiment of admiration she had excited, and was infinitely amused by it. There was something so uncommonly unsentimental, so extremely like a schoolboy, in Oliver's manner, and in his broad, good-tempered face, that amusement could be the only feeling excited. At the same time, the heart of most people leap kindly back to kindness, and she felt very kindly, in an amused, motherly way, towards him.

“ Oh ! you have got all Miss Edgeworth's

books, I see," he said, passing his hand along the backs of a row of well-bound books in a little shelf near which he sat.

"Yes, almost all. Have you read any?"

"All the Franks I have read. We have not many books at home, but we have a good many of *hers*; mamma likes them."

"So does papa, very particularly, and so do we all."

"I have often meant to ask. Were you all named after Miss Edgeworth? It is so odd!"

"So it is," Rosamond said, smiling; "but it was not on purpose, except Frank. My god-mother begged that I might be called Rosamond; then, when Frank was born, papa said he would have a Frank also. Laura again was named by her god-mother."

"I like Frank," Oliver observed. "I don't like Rosamond."

"I am sorry for that. My poor name!"

"I did not mean that!" Oliver cried, colouring up to his temples. "I like the

name—I mean to say, if I did not I do now. But what I meant was, that I like Frank the boy—I mean the book—but I don't like Rosamond."

"Rosamond the girl, or Rosamond the book? I like the stories about Rosamond. Laura and I are reading one now—'The Bracelet of Memory.' I wonder whether you remember it? We had a great deal of discussion about it yesterday."

"I remember. Dorothy was reading it one day, and I took the book out of her hand and read it all, 'Blind Kate' and all. I suppose you were talking about the three choices Rosamond had?"

"Yes. Which should you have chosen?"

"Oh! I should have chosen the money for the horse, of course; but you would not?"

"Yes, I should. That was what I said to Laura, and she was angry with me."

"But you are so fond of pretty things," Oliver said, bending forward in his chair; "and I know you don't like riding."

"But then, you know, I need not have spent the money on the horse."

"But you are not fond of money?"

"Fond of money!" Rosamond repeated, and here she laid down her pen and looked at Oliver. "Do you call it being fond of money to like to have sixty pounds?"

"But I mean to say, I should have thought you were such a contented person that you would not wish for money to spend; and I should have thought that you would like to have a pretty thing."

He spoke in a kind of apologizing tone, as if he was laying before Rosamond what he thought of her, and his hope that he was not going to be disappointed.

"I don't think I am very contented," Rosamond replied; "for I certainly should like to have some money to spend; and, though I like pretty things, I am very sure I should think it dreadful waste to spend sixty pounds on any ornament whatever. When I read about ladies and their dia-

monds, worth thousands and thousands," she added, laughing, "it puts me into such a state of frenzy, that I become quite a Radical, which I am not in general, as you know."

Though laughingly, she spoke so earnestly that Oliver looked at her in some surprise. The very few words she had said had made a little change in the form of that ideal princess he had been venerating. He did not quite know what it was that upset him, but he felt put out.

Rosamond took up her pen again, but not to use it; her mind had gone from Oliver himself to his question, "But you are not fond of money?" She was looking into herself.

There was a silence, till Oliver, as if he had arrived at a satisfactory conclusion, said,

"I suppose, like Rosamond, you want the money for charity?"

Rosamond looked up again; she was surprised at his persistency.

"I certainly should like to have some money for charity—thousands and thousands; for I have got some very large plans; only in my head," she explained, to his wondering face. "But if this particular sixty pounds were given me, I do not think I should spend it all in charity—not unless you insisted upon it," she added, smiling.

"I wonder what you would spend it on? I never should have thought you wished for money; I thought you were so very contented."

"I am afraid not, then," and she shook her head. "I wish dreadfully."

"Do you? I wonder what you wish for?"

"I will tell you one thing that I think I should do with this sixty pounds—I should make that window behind you into a glass door."

Oliver looked round and stared, then said, "But that is such a little thing. Why don't you do it?"

"Because, though a little thing, there

never is any money to do it with. You see, it is a luxury. Papa would like it, and we should all like it, but we can't say that we don't do very well without it; so then other things have to be thought of first. Luxuries ought only to come when there is really and truly money to spare. I mean when we have done all we ought to do with our money. Don't you think so?"

Oliver looked grave. He was beginning to understand her a little better.

"And have you a great many wishes?" he asked, bending forward again, for during the conversation he was swinging himself on a chair—no great blessing to the chair that supported him.

"I am afraid I have. Is it wrong, do you think?"

"Oh! no; for I am sure they are all good."

"Perhaps not very good," as if she was bent on destroying any too favourable impression in his mind. "I don't know what

you will say when I tell you that I wish Laura and I could dress better than we do —have prettier things, I mean."

"Oh! but you look so very nice always! Don't wish that."

"Thank you," and she smiled. "Then I won't wish much. I only confess that sometimes I do. Do you think it is wrong, being discontented, or liking money, to have such wishes?"

"Not wrong; because I am sure you would not wish if it was. I was surprised, because I thought you were so very contented; but now I think you must be something better than contented, because you have the wishes, and never show them."

Oliver spoke out his flattering words as simply as possible. He had no idea that he made a princess of Rosamond, and that it was a pleasure to him to offer up his homage.

But Rosamond was touched. She even blushed a little as she said,

“ You must not think so very well of me, for I don’t think I deserve it ; and it makes me uncomfortable.”

“ I am sure I only say what I think. I never saw anybody like you.”

And there the conversation came to an end, by Frank’s bursting into the room. It left a certain impression on both minds. With Rosamond it was the conversation. The question often and often returned, “ Was she fond of money ? ” Was it to be fond of money to wish, as she was conscious of doing, for many things ? She was only sixteen, and the question only flitted about her. She could not make any decision ; but it certainly kept a sort of guard over her.

On Oliver the impression made may best be stated in words which he once framed in his mind, “ If all that money comes to me that poor Bun told me about, somehow or other I will give a good lot to Miss Vaughan.”

It may be mentioned here that Bun was dead. She died when Oliver was ten. She

had never said any more on the subject of their conference. At first the having told what she had overheard had caused a pang to her conscience, and this withheld her from further mention of it. But as time passed on, the pang had been effaced by indignation. Every time that her mistress, whether laughingly or seriously, alluded to what Mr. Oliver would be, she felt a virtuous sense of triumph in the consciousness that she was no party to the deception.

And Oliver had asked no questions. For the most part, he forgot the confidence which interested him but little. He could think of whether it would rain or be fine the next day or week, but the great future had hitherto been wrapped up in such questions as that. Until after that conversation with Rosamond Vaughan, he had very seldom consciously said "lots of money," nor did he often think of such words now.

CHAPTER VIII.

“I SAY, Marion,” said Mr. Beaumont to his wife, “that young man of yours must learn to know his own mind—you must look sharp, I say, and make him know it.”

It was the common habit of Mr. Beaumont to ignore the relationship between himself and his children—that is to say, to ignore it on certain occasions. He was willing to be a Summer-weather father, but if his children were either ill or naughty, they were Mrs. Beaumont’s children. In all the anxieties regarding Oliver’s profession, he was his mother’s, not his father’s son.

“It is certainly very vexing of Oliver,” replied Mrs. Beaumont, pathetically.

“But don’t stand his vexation—that’s what I mean. Tell your son he must look sharp, and know his own mind—tell him you won’t stand his nonsense any longer.”

“I don’t think he means to have any nonsense. Of course, poor boy, he cannot know why we are anxious.”

“No matter for that; you want him to decide, and that ought to be enough for him.”

“Perhaps it would be best if you were to say a word to him yourself before he goes back; he would think more of your words.”

“No, no—no, no. I have no fault to find with the boy; he’s doing well enough; but time slips on. You say he will be sixteen in November? He must look sharp. Tell him you insist upon knowing what he means to do in life; he must know his own mind—that’s all.”

Mr. Beaumont spoke very emphatically. If he had spoken for another hour, he

would only have repeated the one phrase, that Oliver must look sharp. Perhaps he was aware of some poverty in his power of speech, and, therefore, threw all his eloquence into his looks and emphasis. Mrs. Beaumont saw how much he was in earnest, and so, indeed, was she ; her anxiety equalled his.

This conference took place just at the close of the Summer holidays. Oliver had not been at home at Easter ; he had passed all the holidays with Frank. But he had now been nearly seven weeks at home, and yet during all that time Mrs. Beaumont had never found the proper moment to speak to him seriously. She had used the word vexing, and that was what she felt ; yet she had no reason to suppose that Oliver really wished to baffle her or avoid her. Nor did he do so ; he had, indeed, a boy's natural indisposition to serious conversations, and was apt to slip away if he saw one coming. But if he had had the least idea that his

mother was anxious—really anxious—to speak to him, he would have submitted.

During these Summer weeks he had never been still. His amusements were very simple; so that there was amusement, and it was out of doors, he did not much care what the sport was. He was as happy in teaching his little twin-brothers a kind of infantine football as he was when seriously occupied with his own cricket; but he never was still, and he had collected a series of articles of dress so impervious to wet that his mother exercised no kind of authority regarding weather.

He had one day accompanied his father when he went to speak to a neighbouring squire on some matter connected with the farm. The Squire, a good-natured man, was taken with the boy's good-tempered face, and invited him to attend him in his shooting-parties.

“I don't ask you to shoot, young sir,” Mr. Fraser said, “because I have only just

sport enough to amuse my own friends ; but I have a lad of my own about your age, who likes to come with us and see the fun ; and you may do so if it would give you pleasure."

Some young gentlemen of the advanced age of fifteen or sixteen would have called this a flat proposal ; but to Oliver it was welcome. He accepted it with hearty gratitude, and many long days from this time forward was absent with his new friends.

Mrs. Beaumont had seen the weeks slipping by with despair ; and yet there were moments which she might have used, had she pleased ; which she sometimes reproached herself for not doing, and yet which again and again she neglected to use.

These were the short half hours on Sunday when Oliver said his catechism. He had not yet been confirmed, and being a boy without any airs of manhood, he continued to say his catechism with Dorothy—and even with the little twins, who were begin-

ning to learn it, without objection. On these occasions, he was not only willing to learn, but he was quiet and reverent; and when Mrs. Beaumont would detain him for a few moments, to speak on the subject of his confirmation, and all it would bring, he sat to hear her with a docility that was touching, from the contrast to his usual habits.

On these occasions it need not have been out of place to talk to him of the responsibilities of his future life, and among them to impress upon him that all men are bound to work in some way or other. But feeling what she did, Mrs. Beaumont could not drag the subject on which she was anxious into these most precious moments. Her inner sense, her unconscious, not her conscious conscience, revolted from it.

So it was that the weeks flew by, and she never said what she wished to say.

On this day, after her husband left her, she sat in deep thought. She was not a

clever woman, nor a quick woman, nor had she that gift most common to women—fertility of resource; and the earnestness with which she endeavoured to frame her words, with a strict regard to truth, hampered her in her plans. Although there was a certain degree of uncertainty in Oliver's prospects, still she could not bring herself to say to him that his father was not rich, and must provide for all his children, and that Oliver must try and do something for himself.

After a long and perplexed musing, a thought occurred to her, and she suddenly put her head outside the door, and called “Dorothy!”

Dorothy was in the garden, helping to look after the twins, who were always in mischief. But she rushed in at the call.

“Take off your bonnet, dear—I have some work for you to do,” said her mother; and they sat down together.

Dorothy was not much quicker in intel-

lect than her father or her mother; but she was a valuable little thing. Without any special tastes or fancies of her own, she lived in the life of others—the most comfortable of daughters to her parents; the most unselfish of sisters to Oliver; a second little mother to the twins. She inherited her mother's keen sense of duty, and added to it a kind of imperturbable resolution in doing it, which made her, and would always make her, a true help to all who wanted assistance.

This was the thought that had suddenly struck Mrs. Beaumont. Perhaps Dorothy could do what she had failed to do.

After they had worked at a rough dress that was preparing for a twin for some time in silence, Mrs. Beaumont suddenly said,

“Do you know, Dorothy, what Oliver means to be?”

The question was asked quietly, and Dorothy quietly answered, “No, mamma,” which was not encouraging.

“Most boys talk of their wishes,” she began again, “especially when they speak freely to their companions.”

“But, mamma, Oliver is so happy, I don’t think he has any wishes.”

Dorothy looked up from her work as she stated this fact, as if it was a satisfactory answer. Mrs. Beaumont smiled.

“It is pleasant to think of that, dear, but, you know, there is a future coming.”

“Yes, mamma,” and both mother and daughter looked serious over their truism.

Dorothy was not quick, and having no idea that anything but common conversation was going forward, gave her mother no help. She was putting in a sleeve, and her thoughts were with the sleeve.

Poor Mrs. Beaumont felt baffled. She had not wished to excite curiosity, or any other feeling, in Dorothy’s mind ; she had wished only for her help in making a discovery ; but finding that Dorothy knew no-

thing, and guessed nothing, she was obliged to be more in earnest.

“Your papa is very anxious to know Oliver’s wishes, Dorothy,” she said at last, simply—“so, indeed, am I. Do you think you could find out what they are?”

“I would try, mamma. But, mamma,” she added, putting down her sleeve, “Oliver hardly ever talks about the future.”

It was just what Mrs. Beaumont felt—it was what had baffled *her*. She was annoyed to hear Dorothy make the same observation.

“That may be so,” she replied at last; “but his not talking of it does not alter the case. If dear Oliver lives and thrives, there *is* the future, and he must go into it. I want him to think about it, and to choose what he will be.”

“Poor Oliver!” Dorothy said, a smile brightening her face. “It must not be anything very hard or learned for him.”

“I don’t know about that, Dorothy.

Oliver is doing tolerably well at school."

"Oh, yes, mamma," said her little girl, with docility, for Dorothy never argued.

"But we do not mind what he chooses, only we should like him to express some wish that may help us in beginning to think about it. Your papa is very anxious on the subject, and I thought perhaps you might manage to talk a little to Oliver, and find out what he would like best."

"I will try, mamma—I think I can," and no more was said.

When Dorothy was asked, or told to do anything, it was sure to be done, if possible. She set herself to consider how to find Oliver in a conversable humour. There were but two more days, and one of these, the following, was to be a shooting-day with his new friends.

Her first attempt was very early—before he was up. The hours at Bloomfields were extremely early; but the appointed time for breakfast was not till half-past

eight, when Mr. Beaumont returned from his first inspection of his farm; and though Oliver was occasionally one of the earliest, he sometimes took his schoolboy's privilege of being late.

On this morning he was not up when the twins had their breakfast, and Dorothy, carrying, as she had sometimes done before, a cup of hot coffee from the nursery, sat down upon his bed to converse. But though Oliver condescendingly drank the coffee, he made known, by ways common to men and women without speech, that he was not in a talking humour; and Dorothy wisely understood him, and gave it up.

The reason of his uncommunicative humour was the fact that he had thrust a little book under the clothes as she entered. The little book was "Early Lessons," by Miss Edgeworth; and he was reading the early days of Rosamond. He had opened the book the night before, his eyes dwelling on the name of Rosamond

with some satisfaction ; and, being amused, had put the book under his pillow. But, unaware of the fact that even statesmen have read Miss Edgeworth's childish stories with pleasure, he had no intention that Dorothy should see how he was occupied.

He appeared at breakfast, and lingered over it with insatiable appetite; but when he rose, began to hurry.

“ May I walk with you ? ” Dorothy said, pursuing him.

“ You certainly may, if you have got seven-leagued boots,” he replied ; “ otherwise, I am afraid it will be useless. I must be at Mr. Fraser’s at half-past nine.”

She said nothing, but looked disappointed, and he observed it.

“ If you like to come to the turnstile, to meet me, Dolly, you may. I want to be home early, to finish mamma’s garden-stool ; and I will come home that way.”

“ I shall like it,” she said eagerly. “ At what time ? ”

“Somewhere between four and six,” with a magnificent disregard of Dorothy’s time —“one can’t be sure.”

Dorothy, set on her object, went at four, and was only kept an hour and a half waiting. It was one of the most oppressive Autumn days; and when Oliver at last came, even he was tired. After sitting a few minutes on the turnstile, he began to walk very leisurely home, with his hat in his hand. Dorothy listened while he talked for a little while. She was not very clever in planning, but she instinctively felt that she must let him talk for a time. At last, in answer to a remark of hers, “It must have been very good fun,” he said.

“Yes—awfully jolly; and now it’s all over—what a bore!”

And she felt her opportunity was come.

“And when you come back, Oliver, you will be sixteen.” She made the observation with a little gasp, such as people give when

conscious they are plunging into something beyond their usual depth.

“Yes, I shall be sixteen. How very remarkable! Why do you look so solemn? Do you think I shall eat you when I am sixteen?” And he imitated the voice and looks of the ogre of old.

“No, Oliver. But I am thinking of you. Sixteen is getting on—getting old; and you must begin, you know, to think of doing something in life.”

“Doing something in life! Did one ever hear such a bookish expression? Where did you learn it? Doing something in life!” And he gave a sort of yell.

“I know it is,” said poor Dorothy, “but I don’t know how to say what I want to say better. Never mind my words. I do want you to think, Oliver, about doing something; and you know what I mean.”

“But I don’t know what you mean. It seems to me I do a pretty good deal in life. An hour ago I was shooting; now I am

talking; in a few minutes I shall be carpentering, then I shall be eating, then — ”

“ Oh! Oliver, stop. I don’t want to talk nonsense. Really, Oliver, I think mamma and papa are anxious about your beginning to work a little. I mean to say,” as she saw astonishment in his eyes, “ begin to think about work; in the future, you know. You know you must be something, Oliver; you must know that.”

Dorothy had put her own interpretation on Mrs. Beaumont’s words. Mrs. Beaumont had not said a word about work, or the necessity of the case; but Dorothy had read in many stories of this necessity for all men, and she supposed it to be Oliver’s moral welfare that was the cause of anxiety. It was to this she had addressed herself.

“ Did papa and mamma tell you to bother—to speak to me?” he said correcting himself.

“ They did not tell me; but mamma did say she wished I could find out what you

would like to do. Mamma is very anxious about it, I think." And she looked pathetically at Oliver.

Oliver made no immediate answer. He was not angry, but he felt puzzled. He was not conscious of the way in which he always slipped out of the subject, and could not understand why Dorothy had been told to press him. It made him think there must be a mystery. After walking for some little time in silence, he said,

"I tell you what, Dorothy, you and mamma and papa are all in much too great a hurry. I was talking, and very seriously, I can tell you, to Mr. Vaughan about it one day—I don't mean about myself, but about education, and professions, and all that—and he gave it as his opinion that a good education is the first thing—I mean a good general education—and that it is much better to have that, and then be fit for *anything*, than to educate yourself only to be fit for *one* thing. Do you understand what I say?"

“I think I do,” Dorothy said, awed; for Oliver, in repeating as well as he could what Mr. Vaughan had said, assumed a statesmanlike manner.

“And I agree with him, Dolly. And so now I will run home and get to my carpentering; though I don’t think I mean to *do* carpentering in the future.”

And, dropping the statesman, he ran off, with Dorothy pursuing behind.

Dorothy repeated Oliver’s opinion to her mother. Mrs. Beaumont was struck by it; and, the subject having been broached, no longer feeling a difficulty in speaking, she followed him up to bed and questioned him about it.

“Yes, mamma,” he replied, “that is what Mr. Vaughan said; and besides Mr. Vaughan, there came this Summer to Shrewsbury Dr. —,” and he named a man whose opinion on such subjects all hold in veneration, “and I happened to hear him talking to a lady about this very thing, and he said,

unless when circumstances made it necessary, he would never hurry to take a boy from school for the purpose of cramming him for a profession ; he would leave him till seventeen or eighteen, to get a good general education. He said he was no enemy to cramming, when it was to refresh what had been learnt, or to begin things that would be wanted ; but he thought, if people took to educating for particular things only, we should have a race of narrow men. I listened to what he said because I liked it."

Not that Oliver had formed any very philosophical opinions on the subject, but he wished to stay at Shrewsbury in peace, and, therefore, the opinion commended itself to his good pleasure. It must also be owned that it commended itself to his good sense, and he repeated what he had overheard, condensing and selecting with the warmth of conviction.

Mrs. Beaumont was as awed as Dorothy

had been, and when she went downstairs, and the words were repeated over again to Mr. Beaumont, he was awed likewise. They were all simple-minded people, who thought no great things of themselves, and were disposed, therefore, to listen to counsel when it came from a respected quarter. The result was that Oliver was allowed to return to Shrewsbury unmolested, and that, cheerfully submitting themselves to anxiety, the subject was left in abeyance for many months to come.

Mr. Beaumont contented himself with observing to Oliver, when he wished him good-bye, that he must look sharp, or the little fellows would be tripping up his heels.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Is Frank’s room ready?” said Mr. Vaughan, putting his head into the drawing-room, where his two daughters were at work.

This was about two years and a half after the date of the last chapter. As Frank was not expected for three weeks or a month, the question was not a fair question to ask; but Rosamond, looking up into her father’s face, saw the answer she was to make.

“ It can be ready, papa, in ten minutes.”

“ Then go, my dear, and get it ready, and we will come in here.” And in explanation of the word “ we,” he moved a step, and a man’s arm was visible on his arm.

“There has been a little accident—not much, I hope—make haste.”

Before “make haste” could be said, the two girls had vanished by another door, and Mr. Vaughan entered, a young man clinging to his arm for support.

“There,” he said, putting him tenderly down on the sofa, “just lie there, and keep quiet till the room is ready. I will go and find somebody to help us up the stairs. I daresay it will be half an hour before Morgan is here; but I am a pretty good doctor myself. Shall I help you with your boot, or will you keep it on till we get up?”

“I will keep it on, thank you.” The young man looked very pale; but more scared than in pain. “I wonder what mischief there is?” he added.

“No great mischief, I hope,” Mr. Vaughan said, cheerfully. “Your nerves are shaken. Lie still, and I will get you some wine.” And he left him.

Having made him drink a glass of wine,

Mr. Vaughan went up to his daughters. The room was almost ready ; and while Rosamond and Laura put the sheets on the bed, he told them what had happened. A young gentleman, driving a kind of dog-cart, had passed him in the village, and had not got far beyond him when the horse fell down. There was a heap of stones just on the spot, and somehow, what with the fall of the horse and the jerk against the stones, the shafts had broken, and the dog-cart went over. When Mr. Vaughan and a labourer ran to the spot, the young man was on the ground and stunned. As soon as he came to himself, Mr. Vaughan had proposed to take him home, which proposal had been gratefully accepted. The labourer was gone for the doctor, but another old man had helped him along.

“ And who is he, papa ? ” asked Laura.

“ That I cannot tell you. The poor fellow seems in pain, and I have made no inquiries. There, that will do, will it not ? ”

Jones and I will carry him up; and you shall stay, Mabel, and help me to examine the leg before Morgan comes."

Mabel was the presiding body of the household, and had been so ever since Mr. Vaughan's marriage. A young girl assisted her occasionally; and Rosamond ordered and guided all.

Mabel stayed, and the girls departed. But when the young man had been carried in, and laid on Frank's bed, Rosamond returned, and entered the room for a moment.

"I hope you will be comfortable," she said, gravely and kindly, approaching him; "but if you feel anything wanting, will you be so good as to ask for it?"

The young man, who still looked scared and pale, coloured a little as he raised his eyes to the young lady, who stood beside him. He tried to recall his wits.

"I am sure I shall want nothing," he said, with politeness—"the room is perfect."

"We all have our fancies," Rosamond

said, smiling. " You will make us all feel happier if you will freely mention yours."

" You are very kind. I will certainly do so."

And Rosamond left the room. She went down to the drawing-room, where Laura had flown to see what secrets the empty place of the stranger could reveal. As Rosamond began to fold up the work that was lying about, she said, in a disappointed tone,

" Are we not going to work any more? I thought we could have a talk."

" I am going into the kitchen. We must see about some beef-tea, and other things. Will you come with me?"

The young ladies established themselves in the kitchen. Rosamond was a first-rate cook, especially in all the little things that take the fancy of an invalid. In very early days she had devoted herself to this employment, for her mother's sake. Jenny, the little maid, was dispatched on divers errands; and Laura assisted her—chiefly

by her presence and her conversation.

“What does he look like?” she asked, as soon as she thought a convenient time for this question was come.

“He looks like a person who has been very much shocked and frightened, I think,” was Rosamond’s answer.

“Oh! Do you think him a coward, then?”

“A coward, my dear Laura!—what a very hard word! I only mean to say he looks very pale, and rather wild. People do, I should fancy, when they have been thrown on their heads; but I suppose you meant, is he good-looking? I should think he was, but I am not sure.”

“Is he like anybody?”

“Not very different from some people, but I don’t know who in particular. He is very dark, and he was excessively pale. I can’t tell you much besides this.”

“I am afraid you don’t like him, Rosamond.”

Rosamond smiled. Laura was of a singularly inquisitive and inquiring nature, and by dint of this quality, was much better informed in small things than Rosamond was. But it was an amusement in the family to baffle her. On this occasion she had shown some acuteness, for Rosamond had not taken a fancy to the stranger. She had not taken any dislike, but she had not fancied him.

“ You are as clever as usual, Laura. I really have not sufficient acquaintance to say whether I like him or not. He has not a face like Oliver Beaumont’s—that sort of face one knows at once that one must like.”

“ Yes. I wish *he* had had an accident instead !”

“ Frank must hear that kind wish,” Rosamond said, laughing, and then called Laura to help her in some preparation she was engaged upon.

As soon as the small affair was settled,

Laura stood again idly by the table, and then began to think. After a short period of reflection, she said,

“I wonder why papa said Frank’s room? It only just struck me as odd—but I do wonder. Why not in the spare room?”

“I don’t know. Papa had some good reason, I guess.”

“Yes, people always have good reasons when they do odd things, and that is why I like to know them. I wonder why?”

“I don’t know,” Rosamond said, “but I guess it was because he wishes Aunt Anna to come here while Aunt Laura is away. He said something about it yesterday, but I don’t know that he has settled to ask her.”

Laura looked grave. After a short consideration, she said,

“If I were you, Rosamond, I should not like Aunt Anna to come here.”

“But I do like it, Laura.”

“Well, I should not; she is always finding fault with what you do.”

“Perhaps she does,” Rosamond agreed, after a moment’s thought; “but then she finds fault with all her heart, and I don’t mind that.”

“How do you mean?” Laura asked, opening her eyes. “I should think that made it worse.”

“No, not if you really think. To be found fault with by captious, peevish people would be dreadful; but Aunt Anna is never cross—she only tells me what she thinks right, and it really does me good.”

“Does it, Rosamond? I don’t think you ever change, whatever she says.”

“Not, perhaps, in most things; but that is because another person is my guide. Some of the things she disapproves of are what papa wishes me to do.” She paused a moment, and then added, in a lower voice, “And mamma wished.”

Rosamond had so loved her mother that it was an effort to her to mention her in common conversation; but she sometimes

did so, for Laura's sake, who had never known her.

"Yes, I see," Laura said, softly; and the conversation ceased for a moment. Observing, however, that her sister was now beginning to make some thin, hard biscuits, in which art she was a proficient, she relieved her mind by another question.

"Do you think, Rosamond—I have often wished to asked—do you think we ought to like our relations, and be glad to have them, whatever they may be?"

Laura did not like Aunt Anna—that was the cause of the ferment in her mind.

"Well, Laura," Rosamond replied, smiling, "I almost think I do."

"However disagreeable?"

"Yes, I almost think I do."

"Or however wicked?" Laura added, endeavouring to get the right on her side.

"I am not sure. I could not answer that question in a hurry. It would need," she added, thoughtfully, "so much guarding

and considering. However, Laura, perhaps we need not think of that part of the subject. You would not call a person wicked because you do not agree with her, would you?"

"No."

"I thought you were somehow thinking of poor Aunt Anna."

"No, not at all, as to the word wicked. But do you know, Rosamond, she sometimes makes *me* feel wicked? Of course I would not be wicked for the whole world; but if anything could make me so, I have sometimes felt she would."

"I know what you mean," Rosamond said, gently and gravely, for she never assumed authority over Laura. "But perhaps it would be better for us not to say such things of papa's sister. And, besides, it is not kind in itself. She has been very unhappy; and no one can know what the effects of very great trials may be—might be on ourselves."

“ Do you mean her losing her only little boy? But then, Rosamond, other people have lost” she stopped.

“ No, I don’t mean that only. She was not happy with her husband. He was not kind to her; and she was very miserable till her little boy was born. Then, when all seemed to be better, and her husband to be growing fond of his home, he went abroad on some business, and died there; and then the little boy died. If she comes, Laura, do think of this, and you will feel pity for her.”

“ I shall indeed—I am sure I do; but only this one thing more I should like to say. Don’t you think if she had been more cheerful, like papa, her husband might have liked her better?”

“ We cannot tell what she was, Laura. How can we? I should say, from her picture, that she was very different when she was young. But there is a ring. It

must be Mr. Morgan. Now we shall hear about the accident."

"And I hope we shall hear who he is," Laura observed.

CHAPTER X.

THE name of the young gentleman to whom the accident had happened was Mr. Philip Dashwood.

It may be remembered that Captain Delaford had consulted Messrs. Borodaile and Dashwood about his property, and had left them as trustees of the will during Oliver's minority. Philip Dashwood was the son of Mr. Dashwood, the partner in the house.

He was taking a walking-tour in Wales, walking ostensibly, but driving whenever it suited his pleasure, or, rather, whenever he could suit his pleasure by finding anything he liked to drive. He was at present only

a clerk in his father's office, but he was eventually to be a partner, and meanwhile he was a clerk on a very liberal scale, having, indeed, as much money as he liked to ask for. But this was from his father.

Mr. Dashwood had made a good deal of money, and he hoped that Philip would follow in his steps, and make a good deal also ; that it should be so, he kept him pretty hard at work in the office business. But his son had not been well during the Spring, and, although at a very busy time, his father had given him three weeks' holiday and a good sum of money to amuse himself with. In search of health and amusement, he was making a tour in Wales when his accident happened.

The accident was not very serious. His leg had taken an awkward position as he fell, and there were sundry contusions, and sprains, and strains, and bruises, besides a hurt to the head ; but there was no real injury, and after four or five days of quiet, he

was pronounced, and felt himself to be, convalescent.

The day before he was brought downstairs, Mrs. Evelyn—Aunt Anna—arrived. Mr. Vaughan had begun to write "My dear Anna" on the day when, in the course of his walks, he was the spectator of Philip's accident. He finished the letter, which might otherwise have been some days in hand, immediately after that occurrence, and instead of asking his sister to come to them while they were alone, he asked her to come, and be of use. And this argument was more to Mrs. Evelyn's mind than the first. She had no opinion of doing anything to please either herself or others, but she was an excellent woman, always ready to help. There are some persons who so educate themselves to consider only the ills of life that one almost wonders what they hope to do in a land of peace, and she was of this class.

It would be hard to say that there was a

shade of disappointment when, on arriving, she found that the young man was recovering, and needed neither nursing nor care. She was of course glad, since to soothe the ills of life was her appointed duty ; yet she certainly had thought with as much pleasure as she ever allowed to herself of healing a body and administering advice to a mind.

Philip Dashwood had not, indeed, received permission to leave his room ; but Mr. Vaughan, putting himself into the young man's place, offered no encouragement to his sister to visit him. The use he had intended to make of her was still to come—to be with his daughters during the recovery, which might prove tedious.

On the morning after her arrival, Mrs. Evelyn, who had been for a walk—on a voyage of discovery as to whether there were any patients near who required her care—looked into the drawing-room. To her surprise, she saw Rosamond and Laura on the floor, sitting beside a white cloth,

on which were large bunches of lilac and laburnum.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“We are making nosegays for those vases,” Rosamond said. “Papa said Mr. Dashwood was to come down this morning, and I thought we should like to have the house bright and fresh for him.”

“I thought you told me you were going to read to Mary Thomson?” Mrs. Evelyn observed, in a dry voice.

“I was; but when papa came down and told us, I put it off—gave it up, I mean, for this morning. I wanted to beautify the house a little,” and she smiled pleadingly to her aunt.

Mrs. Evelyn said nothing, but went on with creaking boots, and creaked upstairs. Laura looked at Rosamond, but met no responsive glance; she continued to make her bunch of mingled flowers, but slowly and thoughtfully.

Mrs. Evelyn quickly returned, with a

piece of knitting, and Rosamond's countenance then brightened, and she proceeded faster with her occupation. Rosamond could not do anything without a little art. Making a bunch of flowers took time, because everything had to be placed in its very best place. Some people are thus born ; they cannot but always do their best. Mrs. Evelyn watched her for a few minutes, then she said,

“ You amaze me, Rosamond ! Is it possible that you can think it right to minister rather to the pleasure of a pampered young man—I do not speak personally : I mean one of the pampered classes—than to minister to the necessity of a poor cripple ? ”

Rosamond coloured, and looked deeply wounded. Laura burst out indignantly—

“ Mary would be the first to wish it, Aunt Anna. She often helps us with our flowers —she always helps us when we decorate the church.”

"Very possibly," Mrs. Evelyn said. "I was not thinking of Mary."

"I see what you mean, Aunt Anna," Rosamond replied, gently; "but, you know, we go whenever we can to Mary. She is as well cared-for, and as happy, poor girl, as a cripple can be, and she was not expecting me. I am very sorry you think I was wrong."

Her aunt made no reply, and Rosamond now rose with her two bunches, and placed one in each large vase. One she put at the end of the drawing-room, and the other she carried into a little hall or large passage, which was outside. She then came and sat down by her aunt, and said,

"It is only because he is an invalid; I think—indeed, I know—such things give pleasure to those who have been shut up."

"I do not doubt it, my dear," said her aunt kindly. "But what is pleasure? Is the gratification of the senses a proper sub-

ject of study—a proper employment of time?"

"Here they come," Laura observed—"I hear papa."

A good deal of noise was indeed heard as Mr. Dashwood made his way downstairs, supported by Mr. Vaughan. He came along very slowly, heavily leaning on him, and supported by a crutch. As they passed through the outer passage, his voice was heard.

"Your house is like a garden, Mr. Vaughan—one breathes health in it—I shall be another man to-morrow."

Laura stole a mischievous glance at her aunt and Rosamond; but no response was made by either.

Mr. Vaughan placed the young man on the sofa, and then said,

"That is my sister; these are my daughters—one you already know."

Rosamond went up, and shook hands with him, saying, "I am very glad to see you better."

“Thank you. I am sure I am glad to be better; and I am glad also to be able at last to thank you personally for all your kindness. I have begged your father to do it.”

“Oh! yes,” Rosamond said, smiling, “he has done all you wished.”

Philip Dashwood was, as Rosamond had said, like a good many people—he was handsome, dark, and with good, regular features; but it was one of those faces that one feels one knows, and which only after acquaintance come to possess individuality.

“Now, are you comfortable?” asked Mr. Vaughan. “I am obliged to go out for some hours; and my advice to you is—don’t move—be quite quiet for this day. Morgan said ‘a little movement;’ but the coming down has been more than a little. I advise care for to-day.”

“Thank you—I will obey.”

Mr. Vaughan left the room.

“Does your leg hurt you, sir?” Mrs. Evelyn asked, with old-fashioned politeness.

“Just a little.” He winced as he replied. “The coming downstairs probably has made it throb.”

Rosamond looked at him for a moment, then got up and took a small cushion from a chair.

“Will you let me put this under your knee? There—I think that will make all the difference.”

“All the difference, indeed! You have hit—what is it they say?—the nail on the right head. Thank you very much.”

When she sat down again, he said, “You must not be angry if I return to the theme. That invaluable person, who is called Mabel, has given me an account of all you do—she made me ashamed indeed to think how many of my comforts I owed to you.”

“My cooking, do you mean?” Rosamond said, smiling. “I have been in practice for many years.”

Philip Dashwood would have preferred that the beautiful face should have blushed

at his thanks; but there was no trace of blushes.

“How pretty your room is!” he said, looking about him with interest. “It is odd that I should not have the least recollection of it. I could not have passed any examination upon it. I was thoroughly bewildered the other day.”

“You looked so,” Rosamond said, smiling; “and I suppose if we fall on our heads, that is what we must be expected to do.”

“But I don’t think I did fall on my head. I was thoroughly stunned, however, by the shock. Were you ever stunned? I hope not. It is a most disagreeable sensation. I am very sure it is like being dead, and coming to life again.”

Mrs. Evelyn looked up from her knitting.

“Then, sir, if you will excuse me for saying so, you have had a lesson we all might be glad to have. A real death and a new life might come just as suddenly.”

“That is true,” he replied, civilly. “I

am sure, as far as I am concerned, nothing could have been more unexpected."

But, though he spoke civilly, there was a twinkle of amusement in his eye, and he glanced at the other occupants of the room, to inquire their sentiments. On the face of the younger girl he fancied he read something of response, but on the face of Rosamond not so ; and, though he had looked to find it, he was better pleased when he did not find it.

Philip Dashwood was not irreligious, if irreligion consists in any wilful enmity to, or settled disbelief in, religion ; but if to live without definite faith, definite hope, and definite principle be irreligion, then he was irreligious. He was like the poor Gallio too often quoted, careful for none of these things, and yet, as with many others, not without admiration for anything real.

Unwilling to prolong the conversation, he, however, added quickly,

" But now I hope to be well in a day or

two, and I hope I shall not much longer usurp your brother's room. When do you expect him?"

"Not just yet; and, even if he should wish to come, we have another room that he sometimes uses. It would not have done for an invalid, but he likes it."

"Then I wish he would come. I should like to make his acquaintance."

"Here is Frank," Rosamond said, rising, and taking a photograph from a shelf near the sofa, she put it into Philip's hands. "This has been lately done, and it is very like. I think if you ever meet him you may know him from this."

"A pleasant photograph, and a good position. Where was it done? Edinburgh! Why, how came your brother to be there? I beg your pardon if I am asking impertinent questions."

"Frank only went to Oxford at Easter; all the Autumn and Winter he was reading in Scotland."

“And is he a very learned man?”

“He hopes to be so.”

“And to devote his learning to the Church?”

“Oh! yes, I hope so.”

“And who is that?” Philip said, as he resigned the photograph, and his eye glanced along the shelf to another.

“That is a friend of Frank’s.”

He held out his hand, and Rosamond gave him the one to which he pointed.

“How curious! I saw this photograph the other day. Who is it?”

“His name is Oliver Beaumont. He is a great friend of Frank’s, and was at school with him.”

“Oliver Beaumont!” musingly said. “Why, I saw this photograph the other day in my father’s library. He has a pleasant face—this young gentleman, I mean—and it struck me. But why should my father have Oliver Beaumont? I never heard of him. Who is he?”

“I am afraid I can only repeat what I said before,” Rosamond said, laughing. “Laura, you shall answer this time.”

Philip Dashwood looked at Laura, and she blushed and said,

“If I must not say a friend of Frank’s, I don’t know what to say.”

“My dear, you told me he was a relation of yours,” Mrs. Evelyn said, for she liked the truth, and the whole truth.

“Yes, Aunt Anna, but so distant we did not know it till we knew him.”

“I cannot understand why my father should have had this very photograph on his table,” Philip said again. “Edinburgh, I see.”

“It was done when Frank’s was done—Frank sent us both together. Oliver Beaumont went to Scotland with Frank.”

This was Rosamond’s explanation.

“Has he a father?”

“Oh! yes: Mr. Beaumont lives in Cheshire, at a place called Bloomfields. But

we only know Oliver. I don't know anything about Mr. Beaumont."

"Well, it does not matter," Philip said, putting down the photograph ; "only I must repeat, I cannot understand how he got into my father's library. I am afraid I am a great incumbrance down here, am I not?—in plain words, a terrible bore?"

Rosamond smiled.

"What can I say?" she said.

"I assure you I am not asking for a compliment. My mother does not scruple to say that a gentleman in the drawing-room is one of the worst afflictions woman can be subject to."

"We have not had much experience. Papa is always out; and Frank, when he is at home, is either out, or reading in his room. But if it will make you happier, Laura and I will go to the school for half an hour, as we ought to do."

It was not at all what he wished ; but he

was obliged to beg they would do as they usually did.

“Is it for instruction? Have you to give severe lessons?”

“Sometimes we do; but at this hour we usually go for singing. It cheers the children to have a singing-lesson in the middle of the day.”

“And your sister,” making a sign towards Laura, “is a great singer, I know. I have heard her in the garden. Mrs. Mabel told me who was the performer. I wish I could come and give a singing-lesson too—I mean to say, receive one.”

“Miss Vaughan is a wonderful person,” he observed to Mrs. Evelyn, when they had left the room.

“Rosamond has certainly many gifts,” she replied—“so many that it makes me tremble for her.”

“In what way?” he asked, with curiosity.

“Lest they should interfere with the one

thing on which her eyes ought to be set."

Philip Dashwood was a member of a family who were like himself—very well-meaning and respectable, in a certain sense; but, as well-meaning and respectable people may be, not much occupied with religious thought. It had never happened to him to meet with a character like Mrs. Evelyn's. He had heard of and laughed about "serious people," but he had never thought of them as anything real. There was about this new acquaintance a kind of gentle and grave austerity which carried a conviction of genuineness. His mind was lively and quick, and he contemplated her with interest and curiosity.

"If I am any judge of countenances," he replied, after a moment, "I should say there was no fear—Miss Vaughan might sit to a painter for a Madonna or an angel."

"That is a mere phrase," Mrs. Evelyn replied. "I am not afraid of Rosamond becoming unamiable. She has a character,

and she has gifts which ought to be exclusively devoted to the highest interest. What I fear for her is that she should use them for interests which are solely of this world."

"Would you have her retire to a convent, then?" he asked, in the light manner in which such subjects are dealt with by the thoughtless.

"No, sir—far from it. Not that the idea of a convent affrights me. There are characters and there are circumstances which might find in something of convent life their best sphere of usefulness; but it is not so with Rosamond. She might do much in the world; it is for the world I would have her act."

"I wonder what special fears you have for Miss Vaughan?" Philip asked, with interest, after a short silence. Later in the day he smiled to himself as he thought of himself, the gay Philip Dashwood, in serious talk with an elderly woman, and interested

by the talk. But there was no cause for wonder in the subject. The young man's fancy had been caught by a vision, and we are always willing to hear and to speak where our fancies are concerned. Little as he had noticed the form of the girl who had stood beside him for a moment on the day of his accident, she had afterwards haunted his imagination. The soft, calm face, with its gentle kindness, the graceful yet self-possessed and dignified air, had made an impression upon him—not upon heart or affections, but upon a lively fancy. He had asked questions concerning her, had sketched a character, and when he saw her again, found her more interesting than his visions. It was with real curiosity that he asked the question of Mrs. Evelyn regarding her.

“Can you look round this room, sir, and fail to see the evils I fear? Is not the love of beauty—of mere worldly beauty—stamped upon it?—can you not see that every

arrangement has been made with thought and with art, by time and by care?"

Philip stared, and looked round the room ; he had said, "How pretty your room is!" and had spoken as he felt ; but it was the unexpected prettiness of a country parsonage, the sweetness, freshness, and simplicity that had pleased him. Accustomed to the glitter and luxuriance of modern drawing-rooms, the thought that there was self-indulgence here amazed him.

"Would you have us live in bare cells?" he asked.

"It might be the best extreme of the two," she answered ; "but I am not an advocate for extremes, nor would I impose universal rules. There are persons who require—who need to be incited to some sort of care for externals ; if they were not, we might be barbarians. But we were speaking of Rosamond. Characters have their special dangers ; on Rosamond this world, and ambition, and the love of beauty, and

the love of pleasing, have too strong a hold. They may lead her astray."

"Ambition!" he repeated, still more surprised. "I should never have guessed it from her countenance."

"We may mean different things by the word—words are very vague describers. I have watched her with interest from her childhood, and I have seen the growing up of that ingredient which I call ambition in her character. But we have spoken of her enough. I do not know how I was led on to speak thus to a stranger."

"I suppose because I led you on," he said, "and I beg your pardon if it was impertinent curiosity on my part. You must understand, I never was in a parsonage, nor among good people of this sort, before. Naturally I feel curious."

"It should excite something besides curiosity," she observed, gravely contemplating him.

"I suppose it should," he said candidly—"I think it may."

CHAPTER XI.

“WELL, Marion, have you got that young gentleman of yours to know his own mind?” asked Mr. Beaumont of his wife.

“Yes,” she answered, with alacrity—“that is, in a degree. Oliver has some thoughts of being a lawyer.”

Mr. Beaumont was accustomed to joke with his workmen, and sometimes to laugh as long and as loud as they. At this speech of his wife’s, one of his violent laughing fits came on.

“If I was going to be hanged,” he gasped, “I must laugh, if Oliver was my judge.”

And again he laughed—so heartily that

Mrs. Beaumont laughed; and Dorothy, who was sitting by, went nearly into hysterics.

Mr. Beaumont's question had been asked in the Autumn of the preceding year, when Oliver had finally left Shrewsbury. By dint of begging and praying, by dint of quoting sentiments, and setting forth arguments which neither father nor mother could gainsay, and lastly by an almost dogged resolution to stay at Shrewsbury as long as Frank Vaughan, who was a year his junior, stayed, Oliver had had his own way. But when Frank Vaughan went, he had no longer that excuse, nor the same wish. He was nearly eighteen, and he could be a boy no longer.

Almost immediately on his return home, Mrs. Beaumont, determined to allow no constraint on the subject to grow up again between them, addressed herself to find out his wishes. Now, Oliver had a wish—not at all as regarded his profession—that he looked on as a plaything which, for some hidden

reason, his parents chose to dance before his eyes, and to which it was hardly worth his while to give either a wish or a thought ; but he had a wish as to how he should spend the next six months. Frank Vaughan was going to Edinburgh, to read under the supervision of a person of whom his father had a high opinion. Oliver wished to go with him. When, therefore, Mrs. Beaumont began to question, she found him ready for conversation.

He had considered for what professions hard study, or what was to be by way of hard study, would be most necessary. Frank Vaughan had early destined himself for the Church. Oliver was too naturally reverent to suggest even for a moment that the Church might be the fancy profession he had to choose ; but the Bar was a high-sounding thing, and he had heard it observed that no man was the worse, but perhaps a good deal the better, for having a knowledge of the law. He therefore

determined to mention the law as the possible object of his choice, and did so mention it when his mother spoke to him.

She was surprised for a moment. She had always supposed that Oliver, in the end, intended to choose the Army ; but she had a high opinion of him and his abilities—and indeed, as all things are by comparison, he was in that simple family undoubtedly clever and well-informed. She only said,

“ I suppose you know, Oliver, that it will require very hard reading. I am told that it is a very difficult thing to understand the laws of the country.”

“ Of course it is, to understand them all thoroughly ; but that would be looking forward for a great many years to come. I suppose, motherams, you won’t wish me to be Lord Chancellor ?”

He looked curiously and archly at her, but she so little supposed he had any meaning, that she only smiled, and said,

“ At any rate, Oliver, I shall not much

expect it of you." After a moment she went on—"Your father will be very much pleased that you have made up your mind. We can now think what will be the best steps to take."

"But I have not quite made up my mind ; and I will tell you what I think will be best for the present. Frank Vaughan—" And he then sat down by her side and told her his plan of going to study with Frank Vaughan for six months ; he should afterwards, he said, be able to decide whether he was up to the law, or to any other hard study. He put forth his plan ably and coaxingly, as is customary with people where their wishes are concerned, and he made his mother a convert to his opinion, as, indeed, was usually the case with him.

When, therefore, Mr. Beaumont recovered from his laughing-fit, and inquired where the future judge intended to prepare himself for his vocation, she put before him, in

Oliver's words, Oliver's plans, and, picturing them with equal warmth—for, indeed, besides pleasing Oliver, she thought the plan good—soon obtained from Mr. Beaumont his approval and consent.

“Only,” he said, shaking his head and looking solemn and wise, “Oliver must look sharp.”

Thus it was settled, and Oliver went to study at Edinburgh. He did read in a degree; it could hardly be called study. But he satisfied a conscience—not very acute on that point, though a good conscience, on the whole—by a certain amount of reading. His mind was not without curiosity, and he was at times interested by the discovery of the meanings of our laws and customs—by the first rudiments, that is, of the study of law. But here the reading stopped. When he felt bored, he saw no great necessity for being bored, and he allowed himself a good deal of the recreation that he felt to be, on the other hand, necessary to his welfare. It

was hardly in human nature that it should have been otherwise.

“It is all for fun,” his mind was perpetually *feeling*, even when the words were not said. It required a taste for study to overcome the feeling of the moment, and that he had not.

During his childhood and boyhood he had thought but little of his future prospects, but they began to occupy him now. He often went over that memorable conversation with his nurse; and as the scene with more and more vividness pictured itself before him, he said,

“It *must* be true. I am sure Bun meant what she said—I am sure she knew. I suppose they will tell me some day; and I can wait.”

And day by day the conviction deepened, and as it deepened his indifference regarding the fancy profession increased.

Oliver Beaumont had been a popular boy, and he was now a popular youth. It

was impossible not to like him. He made, therefore, many friends wherever he went; and so it happened that, when Frank Vaughan at Easter returned home, before going to Oxford, Oliver had some invitations to remain in Scotland. Among other invitations, he had one to go far north in May for fishing.

He wrote one of his persuasive letters to his mother, coaxing where he addressed her feelings, and adding sound arguments for the intellect. As he was in Scotland—as he might never have such a chance again—as, *if* he was a lawyer, he should have in future to keep pretty tight, and so on.

Although the dash under the word “*if*” threw some little vagueness upon the future profession, both Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont were satisfied that all was going to be properly settled, and very readily agreed to Oliver’s request. Mr. Beaumont did, indeed, beg that his own peculiar and sound

advice might be added in a postscript to the letter, as, "Your father begs me to add that, when you come back, you must *really* look sharp ;" but the permission was cordial and complete.

Oliver was very much gratified. He passed two or three months of great enjoyment, and when he came home, sunburnt, healthy, and happy, he brought such joy, and brightness, and amusement into the house that all were content to bask for a short time in the pleasantness of the return, without introducing topics of discussion or cares of the world. But all careless times must come to an end, and even before she was urged to do so by Mr. Beaumont, Mrs. Beaumont spoke to Oliver.

" You will be nineteen in a few weeks, my dear boy," she said, one rainy morning, having found him for once reading in the drawing-room.

She spoke in that somewhat oracular tone in which people speak when they have made

up their minds to say a thing. Oliver looked up from his book.

"Well, yes, mother, so I shall ; but it is not my fault. I assure you I would help it if I could."

Mrs. Beaumont smiled.

"I believe I would help it too, Oliver, if I could. I am very sorry to lose my *boy*. But," she added, composing her face again to seriousness, "this is a foolish way of speaking. I want to have some talk with you. We must settle about this future, you know."

After a short pause, and a look of something like reflection, Oliver put aside his book, rose up from his chair, and said, "Yes, I suppose we must." He then came and stood near her, not with his back to the fire, for it was Summer, and there was no fire, but leaning against the marble chimney-piece, with his hands in his pockets.

Mrs. Beaumont had often wished to find her son in a mood for serious conversation,

but somehow or other, now the mood was come, she did not know what to do with it. This determined attitude of attention daunted her—put out of her head all the wise and good things she had intended to say. It was quite a relief when Robin, the eldest twin, came in and said,

“Mamma, Mr. Saunders wants a new pen.”

She got up and went with him, but, to her dismay, on returning, found Oliver in exactly the same attitude awaiting her.

“Well, mother,” he said, after a moment, “you said you wanted to have a talk with me.”

“Yes, Oliver, about this future, you know,” she replied, while she endeavoured to collect her scattered thoughts.

“Yes—what about it?” He remarked—he had before now remarked—the signs of trepidation when she spoke to him on this subject, and he laid them all to a cause. It had quite suddenly entered his brain

that he would *make* her speak. Hence his attitude of attention.

“Why, the time is getting on, Oliver; and then your father wishes to have the matter settled. You must be something, you know. It is time for you to settle what.”

“Why must I be something?” he asked.

“My dear Oliver,” she replied, surprised by the question, but not alarmed by it—she only thought he was fighting off, “almost all people must. Why should you not?”

“Lord Nantwich’s eldest son need not.”

Mrs. Beaumont was still more surprised, but still only thought it was Oliver’s fighting off a settlement of the question. She answered with a warmth that she felt,

“He need not for his livelihood, certainly; but I think it is a great pity he does not. I hear he is a very good-tempered, but a very idle young man; and it might save him from a great deal of ill if he was forced to work, like others.”

This was not quite the answer Oliver had wished to have. He thought over it for a moment, then he said,

“But he *need* not.”

“No, he *need* not, certainly.”

“But you say I *must*.”

“Yes, you *must*,” she answered readily, but still without facing what he meant.

He looked perplexed; but then again returned to the charge.

“Now look here, mother—I sometimes fancy that there is a reason why I *need not* choose. Will you answer me truly—is there none?”

Mrs. Beaumont’s very pulses stood still with shock and dismay; but great powers come to the very simplest on great occasions. There was no pause, there was no outward sign of emotion on her cheek as she slowly and steadily answered him,

“If I answer you, Oliver, it must be to tell you there is none.”

How the phrase so came into her head,

she could not tell. It seemed afterwards almost like a miracle to her. Oliver looked at her fixedly, and with dismay very visibly painted on *his* face.

“What makes you ask?” Mrs. Beaumont asked, still preternaturally composed.

“Never mind, mother. Now you have answered me, of course I believe you; and I will do whatever you and my father wish. As I have begun this law business, I think I may as well stick to it; so settle for me just whatever you like. And where’s Dorothy, for I must have a game of battle-door, to wipe off unpleasant thoughts.”

He threw down his book, and ran out of the room; and Mrs. Beaumont went up to her room, and took a few drops of sal-volatile, for now that it was over, she found herself shaking and trembling like an aspen leaf.

What could Oliver mean? What had she ever said or done to put a suspicion into his head? She was a humble woman, and she

accused herself, feeling she must somehow or other have treated him in a way that had led him to imagine he was a greater person than his natural position warranted.

She told her husband what had passed in some trepidation, expecting an accusation of this kind from him—"I always told you so. You treat your son as if he was Prince of Wales," which indeed was a phrase he had used when she was lately gaining his permission for Oliver to remain in Scotland. But on this occasion Mr. Beaumont was so lost in wonder at, and admiration of, his wife's readiness of speech that he had no room for any other feeling.

"If I had thought for a thousand years," he very truly said, "I should never have thought of that way of putting it. I hope I should not have told a lie, but if I did not it must all have come out."

The danger seemed now to be safely tided over. If Oliver was disappointed—and he was—he did not show it. A week's

fine weather followed, and he threw himself into the enjoyment of cricket and haymaking, and whatever amusement was to be had, in the same way as Oliver the boy had done ; and, with respect to the business in hand, he begged his father to settle for him, and he would do his best.

Mrs. Beaumont suggested that it would be as well to write to Mr. Dashwood and ask his advice. This was done, and Mr. Dashwood replied that he thought Oliver could not do better than come to learn his business in his office for a time. He had, he said, one vacancy, and would be glad to see him, but must postpone the pleasure for a month or six weeks, as he had been seriously ill.

Thus far the matter was happily settled, and Oliver was allowed to please himself during the respite.

CHAPTER XII.

PHILIP DASHWOOD was left at Glenowen Parsonage, recovering from his accident. This recovery was rapid. He had received a great shock, but slight injuries, and after the day of his first coming down there was no drawback. It must always be pleasant to have the use of a limb restored, yet Philip saw the approach to perfect recovery with dismay. He would soon have no excuse to linger at Glenowen, yet there he desired to linger; for he had lost his heart, or was in a fair way to lose it, to Rosamond Vaughan.

For Philip to lose his heart was not a new thing; he was near twenty-four years old, and he had lost his heart once in every year

since he was a schoolboy. But he had not hitherto lost his heart in a serious way—never to one who awed as well as attracted. That was the case now; and there were other symptoms on this occasion more serious than was usual.

Rosamond piqued him—her ease, her almost matronly kindness to him, piqued him. She seemed so perfectly unconscious that he was Philip Dashwood—one generally considered a dangerous person. He could not make her blush by any of his speeches—either his warm, open thanks or his insinuated compliments. He could not make her out, and he endeavoured to make her out, and when the study of character begins there is no saying what the end will be.

The whole family were very kind to him—as indeed was their custom to all who came under their roof. Mr. Vaughan hired the open chay, with one of the strong little ponies, and drove him daily about the

country. Laura got over her shyness, and talked to him, and sang to him, and amused him, and was much amused herself; and Rosamond was undeviatingly careful for his health, and attentive to his wants. But, as may be imagined, this attentive kindness was not what he wanted. He had begun to lose his heart, and what he required and desired was that she should in some degree show symptoms of the same—should at the least melt towards him. But the circumstances of the house made a real acquaintance with her difficult. He wished to draw near, to discover what were her thoughts and opinions; but he could not do this in public, and he never found her alone and disengaged.

What Mrs. Evelyn had said about her ambition was a subject of great curiosity. The more he became attracted by her, the more did he think with pleasure of this feature in her character; but he could not at all times believe the truth of the state-

ment. There was such an absence of what *he* called ambition in her words and ways. She seemed so utterly indifferent to grandeur, or the shows of things; so simply honest in allowing her ignorance of the world and its doings; so satisfied—as it seemed, at least—with her obscure position in life—in short, she puzzled him.

He was one day talking to Mrs. Evelyn about a young man of a neighbouring county whose name was familiar to him, and whose estates were close to her home. This young man had been, in his early days, more than usually promising, but as he advanced in life, he not only disappointed the hopes formed, but became unusually ill-spoken of, engaging in pursuits ruinous alike to his fair character and opening prospects.

Philip inquired of Mrs. Evelyn whether there had been any cause for such a transformation—any special temptation.

“Yes, sir—money,” she replied, with

warmth—"money, which is the cause of all the evil in this world."

Laura was present at this conversation. Between her and Mrs. Evelyn there was not at any time much sympathy; and at this sweeping statement her blood boiled.

"And yet, Aunt Anna," she burst out, "Rosamond wishes, of all things, for money; I don't think, therefore, it can be so very bad a thing."

Philip looked at her quickly and curiously. Mrs. Evelyn, slowly, and with some dismay.

"I have often feared that Rosamond wished for money," she said at last, gravely; "but I am sorry to hear you say it."

"Why, Aunt Anna?—why be sorry? She only wishes to have it to do good with it."

"Of course, my dear. I should never suspect Rosamond of wishing for anything but good, or—what seems like good; but it is very sad that she should wish, neverthe-

less. If God had intended her to have money, He would have given it to her. She must be content to use well what she has."

"And so she does, I am sure," Laura said, angrily; "and anybody may see that she is the most contented person in the world. She is much more contented than I am."

Mrs. Evelyn smiled a little, and said,

"You are not perfect, Laura."

"I know I am not—I did not mean I was; but I think you are very hard on Rosamond. Is she not?" appealing eagerly to Philip.

"I think so—as far as I understand, at least," he replied.

"What have I said harsh or hard, Laura? You say Rosamond wishes of all things for money. I only say I grieve to hear it, knowing better than you or she can do how dangerous money is."

"But it would not be dangerous to her.

To do things people *must* have money—you know they must—and Rosamond has a thing she wants very particularly to do. How can she do it without money?"

"Probably not at all. But then she ought not to think of it. If it pleased God that she should do great things, He would give her the money. Money is the cause of all evil, and it is very dangerous to wish for it."

Mrs. Evelyn spoke so calmly, so without a trace of anger or irritation, repeating her austere statements indeed, without qualification, but with such quietness that she lashed the poor little girl into a frenzy. She launched into a violent defence both of Rosamond and money, saying she should have thought, when excellent plans were put into people's heads, it was a sign they were to work them out, and that anybody could see Rosamond was not a common person, who would be vain and conceited if she did anything good, and she was sure

she hoped Rosainond *would* have money, because she *knew* it would be good for people that she *should* have it.

She was in the midst of her excited speech, saying many things Rosamond would not have wished her to say, Philip listening with amusement and interest, when Rosamond came in. At the sight of her sister, Laura paused, and became crimson ; then, as Rosamond looked surprised, said,

“ I didn’t mean to be cross, Rosamond ; but Aunt Anna said money was wicked, or almost that, and I said it could not be, because *you* wished so much to have it.”

Rosamond blushed more deeply than Philip had ever seen her blush before, and for a moment, as the six curious eyes were fastened on her face, looked annoyed. She guessed that Laura might have been saying indiscreet things, but she was not going to desert her faithful advocate. She smiled at her and said—

“ Of course I don’t know what you have

said, Laura, but I agree with you that I don't like to hear money abused. Money is a good thing in its way—is it not, Aunt Anna?"

"I don't know, my dear," Mrs. Evelyn replied gravely. "If Laura quarrels with me for saying money is the root of all evil, I am afraid it is not I that say it."

"The love of money, is it not?" Rosamond said gently. "That is different."

"The love of money—yes, you are right. But to *wish* for money is to love it. But we will argue no more; we will speak of it another time."

Philip had felt curious about Rosamond's ambition; he now felt curious about this desire for money, and watched and watched for an opportunity to ask about it. Two days after the conversation he found this opportunity. It was a bright June evening, and Mr. Vaughan, before he and Laura and Mrs. Evelyn began some hard work that had to be done in the garden, helped Philip

to a long sofa-seat which had been placed for him near Rosamond's bower. There he sat and read while the others worked—that is, he was by way of reading, but his eyes perpetually strayed to the house; for what was the use of placing him by Rosamond's bower, if she was not there?

Presently she came, carrying a large basket of green twigs, and, sitting down in her bower, began to twine the little branches into wreaths and garlands.

Philip curiously inquired what she was doing, and she explained that they were going to have a feast for the children of the choir on the Tuesday following.

“As we have no place but a shed to hold it in,” she said, “we make the shed pretty with our own devices.”

Anything and everything of country life was so new to Philip that he made many inquiries regarding this feast, and the largeness of his ideas on the subject amused Rosamond. Evidently turtle, as a provision

for school-children's appetites, would hardly have surprised him. But Rosamond enlightened him on this point. She said that, although some little novelty was always provided, if possible, yet that novelty was not required, not that which was most successful.

"Bread and butter, and plenty of it," she said. "Make sure of that for country children, and you are safe."

"Well," he said, "the children are wise. But I did not think children *were* wise. We all wish for novelty, do we not?"

"I suppose so," she replied; and, as was her habit, she began to think instead of saying more. She had so few opportunities of conversation that things carelessly said were often apt to engross her. She paused now upon this question whether or not novelty in itself was pleasure.

Philip watched her for a moment, and then said,

"You are going off, I am sure, on some

abstruse point. Do not debate it now, for I want to talk."

"I was," she said, laughing—"I was thinking to myself whether or not I like novelty."

"And you settled you did not," he observed, mischievously, feeling pretty sure of the contrary.

"I had not time to settle. At a glance, I think I felt I *did* like novelty."

"So I imagined; and, do you know, I see no particular reason why you should not, or why I should not. Where is the merit of being humdrum?"

"Nowhere, I think," she said, laughing again.

"Well, but those who hate all kinds of novelty—who set themselves against everything merely because it is new—are sure to be either humdrum, or, what is worse, bigots. For myself, I own I do like people to have views beyond our everyday life and wishes, even though they may be large ones."

"Now, I know what you are thinking of," Rosamond said, and she blushed.

"Perhaps you do. I was interested by what passed on Tuesday between your aunt and Laura. I see that you and your aunt do not agree."

"My aunt has thought much, and had great experience. I have thought little, and had no experience of life. It would not do, therefore, for me to say I do not agree with her. She may see things in life that I have no notion of."

"I understand that, of course; but still, so far as you do see, you do not agree."

"I hardly know: I think I do agree in her principle. She has been very unhappy, and life has lost every charm in her eyes. This makes her, I think, express herself severely; and yet she is not really severe."

"How about money, then? It seemed to me that she wished for a great broom to sweep all money away, as worse than dross. But you did not seem to look at it in that light at all."

“No,” and she slightly blushed again. “I think to have money must be a great blessing. But then, of course, I see all the dangers she sees.”

Philip saw the blush, which no efforts of his could excite except on this subject of money. His curiosity impelled him no longer to beat about the bush, but to ask the question he wished to have answered.

“Your sister excited my curiosity a good deal the other day. She spoke in her warmth about your dreams, and wishes, and plans. May I ask you what she meant?”

Rosamond blushed more deeply, and hesitated for a moment before she replied. Then she said,

“I will tell you, if you like, but you will be very much disappointed. It is only that all my life—as long as I can remember, at least—I have had in my head a wish to build a home for cripple children. The idea occupies me more, I daresay, than such a fancy ought; and I have often talked of it

to Laura. Such a thing requires money, and a great deal of money. I don't allow myself to wish, but often, when I read of foolish extravagance, Laura hears me say how I wish the wasted money was given to me. That was all she meant."

"A home for cripple children!" Philip certainly did feel blank and disappointed when the words came from Rosamond's lips.

"A home for cripple children," he repeated slowly. "I am so stupid, so ignorant on such subjects that I hardly take in what you mean. Do you mean to say that the building of such a concern occupies your mind?—is your castle in the air?—your romance, in short?"

"Perhaps it is," and she smiled and blushed, and looked so lovely as she thus smiled and blushed, that Philip suddenly felt himself borne into her dreams and animated by them. No longer amazed and musing, but with warmth he said,

"Do tell me about this plan. I am

ignorant, but not uninterested in such things. If you have thought on the subject, no doubt you have a settled plan."

"Oh! yes, I have indeed. There is no part of the plan that I have not looked into and arranged, whether outward or inward. I know it must seem a little insane, but when I was young, papa did not discourage my thinking of it; and now it has become rooted. Even now he does not discourage me, because he says, if I can do nothing, I may help some one else, perhaps."

"But I do not see why it should require so much money."

"*My* plan would. But you are quite right, something might be done with even a very little. I do think of that; but I own that what occupies my mind is my own large plan."

"And what is that? Do tell me."

Rosamond began to speak in a quiet, sober way, but she was not used to have so eager a listener as Philip had now become—

nor indeed on this subject any listener but Laura; and she herself, in depicting her plan to this eager hearer, became so animated with her dream that the dream for a moment seemed a reality.

She described her Home as a kind of hospital of the Middle Ages, with a garden and a chapel attached to it. The Home was to be for fifty or sixty children afflicted with incurable diseases, who were to be instructed and attended and nursed by twelve widows or unmarried women. Everything, she said, in the establishment was to be on the simplest possible scale, as it would have been in the Middle Ages, except the chapel and the garden. Those two things were to be cared for and made beautiful, so that the children might know there was beauty and gladness on earth.

“Perfect!” Philip said, warmly. “But what,” he added, smiling, “do you know about the Middle Ages?”

“Not much, perhaps. But papa has lent

me books about the old institutions, and I have thought the arrangements perfect almost—much more perfect than the costly plans of the present day. They make me angry."

"I see you do not call your Home a convent, and yet perhaps you mean something of the kind. Do you mean your twelve women to be nuns."

"Oh, no! Why did you think of it?"

"I have heard say we are going to have nuns and convents again. I am glad you do not fancy them."

"I am sure I did not say that," Rosamond said. "I only said my women were not nuns. *I* meant it to be a refuge for poor and lonely women, who liked to work; but I did not intend to tie them to it more than was necessary."

"Still I fancy that, if you had liked nuns, you would have made your women nuns," he persisted.

"Perhaps. Well, yes, I think for myself

I like a service that is always free and voluntary better than one that is tied. But characters are very different; one person must not and cannot decide for another."

They talked on. Later in the evening Philip smiled to himself as he remembered how he had entered into the minutest details, but at the time he even forced them from Rosamond in the eagerness of his curiosity.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE morning after this conversation, Mr. Morgan, Philip's medical adviser, told him he was fit to travel. He would have been glad enough to detain his rich patient, but his work was done, and he said so.

Philip had been dreading to hear the fact ; thus plainly told, he could not but act upon the intelligence. When he went to luncheon, he announced his departure for the following day.

Mr. Vaughan most cordially pressed him to stay longer, if a longer stay would be either for his pleasure or his convenience ; but Philip resisted, until Laura observed that he had said he should like to see the school tea. He owned he had done so,

and being again invited to prolong his visit, a stay of two or three days longer was decided on.

Philip was pleased at his reprieve, but he was not pleased with Rosamond. She had joined her voice to her father's in inviting him to stay, but that blush—the blush on his account, for which he so anxiously waited—had not appeared, neither when he spoke of his departure, nor when he determined to relent. In his vexation, he could not help observing, while standing by her for a moment after luncheon,

“After all, I think you would be better pleased if I went.”

The blush which he had wished to excite now appeared, but it was of surprise, of annoyance, not of sentiment.

“What can you mean?” she said, with simple truth. “Indeed I am very glad you should stay.”

And then Philip, annoyed with himself, passed off his vexation on another plea.

“I feel I shall be so horribly in the way—a stranger always is on such occasions.”

And with a ready belief in his plea, which annoyed him still more, she assured him that, if he did not mind their forgetting he was a stranger, his presence—the presence of any stranger—would greatly add to the pleasures of the day. But it so chanced that something more of feeling characterized their parting.

Philip did not remain to see the rural feast. On the Monday morning there came a telegraph message to Mr. Vaughan, announcing the serious illness of Mr. Dashwood. Mr. Vaughan was gone out for some hours, and the message was brought to Rosamond. She felt there was nothing to be done but to take it to Philip, and to help him in his arrangements for departure, and she went to him herself. Mrs. Evelyn offered her assistance on the occasion, but Rosamond felt too much for Philip to deprive him of the encouragement which she

was able to give, but which Mrs. Evelyn, with sadder views of life, refused to see. The message was in these words :

“Mr. Dashwood is seriously ill; let his son return home as soon as possible.”

Mrs. Evelyn saw nothing but death in the words. Rosamond, dwelling on the word “seriously,” and the expression “as soon as possible,” allowed danger, but saw hope in every part. And the hope she felt she communicated to him, and her kindness and gentleness could not fail to touch a heart already deeply touched. Although he said no words, he could not, in his hurried, softened, and excited state, wholly govern his feelings, and she became partly enlightened in those last moments as to his sentiments for her. While he held her hand, and poured into her ear his murmured thanks—she and Laura standing with him on the threshold before his departure—the strength of the pressure, and the fervour of the gratitude, brought into her cheeks that blush

which he had so pined to call forth, and which even in that moment caused a gladness in his heart.

“Well, I never thought of such an end as this,” Laura said sadly, as they returned to the drawing-room. “How dreadful it is!” and she shuddered.

Most persons would have felt pity and sympathy for a young mind thus suddenly, and for the first time, brought in contact with the uncertainty of life and earthly peace; and in her heart Mrs. Evelyn had sympathy, but she would have thought it wrong not to seize the opportunity offered for impressing a wholesome truth.

“We never do think of what the end of any one hour may be,” she said, with her calm gravity, “and yet there is no day, nor hour, nor moment in which we are safe from the hand of death.”

“Oh, don’t speak so!” Laura said, pitifully. “How could one live and think it?”

“We *must* live and think it, because it is

truth ; and I could almost be thankful, Laura, deeply as I regret Mr. Dashwood's sorrow, for any occasion that carries the truth home to my mind and to your mind."

"Thankful!" and Laura repeated the word with a kind of passionate indignation.

"Yes, for we are all of us earthly, and apt to forget."

"I think it is almost time for papa to come home," Rosamond said suddenly, speaking for the first time. "Will you go and meet him, Laura, and tell him what has happened? And be sure you tell him," she added, "that I think there is good hope about it all?"

Laura looked at her with grateful thanks, and sprang out of the room.

"Laura is very young," Rosamond then said, turning to her aunt, "and she is not like me ; she has never known what sorrow is. Do you think it is good to sadden her?"

"What do you think yourself, Rosa-

mond? Has it not been good for you to be troubled?"

"For me—yes," she said, after a pause of thought. "So great a sorrow would not have been sent unless it had been good for us; and I know it was good for me. But Laura is different. It was not for her; and perhaps not for her because she did not need to be so early subdued. Must she have her mind troubled by fears while still so young?"

"It is to spare her from being overmuch troubled that I would speak," Mrs. Evelyn said, gently. "Let her early learn what she must learn later—how frail all earthly happiness is."

"Can that be taught? I mean, can we learn not to shrink? When that message was brought me, I thought it was about Frank. It was a dreadful moment!" and her colour rose at the mere remembrance of what she had felt. "Do you think the having such fears makes one suffer less?"

“What I think, my dear Rosamond, is that we are all very earthly, and that we should bless the Hand that in every accident of life is saying to us, ‘This is not your home.’ And the more free from care a home is, and the more,” and she glanced round the room, “the sins and miseries of the world are kept out of sight, the more we should be thankful for the warnings which bid us never rest. In this home,” and again her eye glanced round, “I think there is a tendency to build tabernacles, as St. Peter wished to do ; and I warn you against it.”

Rosamond sat thoughtful ; but it was not her aunt’s last words that occupied her thoughts. There are minds, and good and holy minds, too, who, when happy on earth, are so radiantly happy and satisfied that they would build tabernacles here below if they could. But it was not so with Rosamond. Dangers there might indeed be in her disposition, but a resting in earth was not a danger. In her the instincts of

even a natural immortality were so strong that, had she been a heathen, she would have said confidingly,

“ Can the mind of man, the immortal soul,
Which on earth seems bounding from earth’s control—
Can that spirit by death to flesh be linked,
All its ardour quenched, and its hope extinct ?
Ah ! no, there’s a bright and blissful sphere,
Where it soars when freed from its bondage here.”

And to that blissful sphere her thoughts were for ever straying.

She was thoughtful, because agitated. The shock of the coming of the message, the having to break it to Philip, and the discovery she had made at his departure, had excited her mind, and she was one of those for whom excitement was not good—not good, speaking of things on the surface. Some have sluggish temperaments, and for them almost any excitement is good ; but there are others who have too much life in their hearts ; a mere touch makes every nerve to throb ; and when this is the case, excitement, even when healthful, is not—

still speaking on the surface of things—the atmosphere in which they thrive.

Rosamond had this sensitive nature. She was thoughtful, because her vision of life, of what earth might be, was disturbed. A cloud had come upon the mirror. She could not feel clear, as she generally did, that there was something not only too severe in her aunt's views, but something untruthful at the root of those views. At last she looked up, and said,

“Do you remember, Aunt Anna, that it is somewhere said, in one of the prophets, ‘And have made the hearts of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad.’ You know I don’t for one moment think this is meant for children, but I sometimes think we may apply it to children.” She stopped for a moment, and then, with a colour slightly rising, went on, “Mamma used to say that children and flowers were the two things she thought of for comfort, when the sins and sorrows of the world made her too

unhappy ; and that the thought of them always comforted her. She then saw what it was that was *meant*. Flowers are sometimes blighted, and children sometimes suffer, but for the most part children are happy ; and should we sadden them when it was not what was *meant* ? ”

It was the excitement in Rosamond’s mind that made her speak, for many words with her was a rare thing, especially to Mrs. Evelyn, and Mrs. Evelyn looked surprised.

“ You wish me to say no more to Laura,” she said.

“ It is what I wish, certainly, Aunt Anna. Laura is peculiar ; not at all like me. I can believe sad thoughts are good for me, but they might make Laura bitter ; unless they are *sent* to her. That would be different.”

“ I may not agree with you, Rosamond,” Mrs. Evelyn replied, “ but I will do as you wish. Indeed, I myself should not have

said more on this occasion. Let it do its own work."

Rosamond's sanguine views regarding Mr. Dashwood's illness proved in the end to be correct. On the next morning the gentleman who had sent the telegraph wrote to Mr. Vaughan, saying that, in case Philip had not been able to start immediately, he still wished him to come, if possible, although the illness in the last few hours had taken a more hopeful turn.

This account relieved their minds, and Laura, who, after having much enjoyed Philip's visit, had been unusually depressed, cheered up to conduct the settled feast.

But, although Mr. Dashwood's illness had taken a good turn, he was seriously ill; and he himself took a desponding view of his state. Three days after Philip's return, he sent for him and begged him to bring divers boxes and papers to his bedside. His illness had not affected his mind, nor had it yet greatly weakened him; and, although exer-

tion and excitement were forbidden, he was such a man of business that, to forbid all thought, was to attempt an impossibility.

“They tell me I shall get well,” he said, as his son obeyed his orders, and placed the boxes he had brought on a table near the bed, “but I am not so sure as they are; and better to do my business while my mind is clear.”

“They have no doubt, father, that you will get well,” Philip said, confidently.

“I don’t know. There are ugly symptoms,” and he shook his head. “But I am better, thank God! and Chambers will pull me through, if man can do it. Meanwhile, let me do my business, as I said, while my mind is clear. I shall be the easier and get on the better.”

“Yes, sir, all right. I will attend as well as I can.”

Mr. Dashwood was the possessor of various family secrets. Some of these weighed on his mind; more especially as

Mr. Borodaile, the other possessor of the secrets, was in infirm health. As it was a settled thing that Philip was to be a partner in the house, Mr. Dashwood determined to make them over to him at once, in case of accidents, although he had not as yet shown any remarkable qualities for business of this, or indeed of any, kind.

He took various packets of letters into his hand, and, selecting a few letters, put them into his son's hands, desiring him to read them. When each letter was read, he made some observations.

Philip, anxious to attend to and quiet his father—for he was an affectionate son—read and listened patiently, but there was nothing that greatly excited his interest; and, after a few things had been discussed, he said,

“Surely, father, you have done enough for to-day?”

“I have—I feel that. But I still want to put you *au fait* of Oliver Beaumont's business.”

“Oliver Beaumont!” Philip cried. “What! that boy!” and he turned to look for a photograph, which, however, was not in the room.

“What do you know of Oliver Beaumont?” asked his father, surprised.

“I met with him lately—I mean to say, I met with his photograph. He has a pleasant face. I had been struck with it in your study, sir, and I saw it again at the Vaughans’.”

“At the Vaughans’, did you! I did not know they were acquainted.”

“Why, father, what do you know about them?” Philip said, with eager interest.

“I am going to tell you what I know. Now listen,” and he concisely stated the history of the will, so far as Oliver and its condition was concerned. He then went on: “Now all I have to say to you, Philip, is that, should anything happen to me, you must see that the condition is properly carried out—fairly carried out. We

will speak on the subject again, but I was anxious to tell you the facts now."

"Yes, sir; and supposing this Oliver to fail in the condition, to whom would the property go?"

"To an acquaintance of yours—Rosamond Vaughan, and to her without any condition."

"To Rosamond Vaughan!" and Philip almost screamed in his surprise.

His father nodded. Philip sat staring.

"Well, Philip, what is the matter?"

"It is so strange, sir! If you knew her, you would say so too. She is poor, but she is born to be rich. She even longs for riches."

"I daresay she does," observed Mr. Dashwood drily—"so do many people."

"Ah! but her wishes are not like most people's. They are the wishes of a saint."

"Well, Philip, this I will tell you, to set your mind at rest on that point—there is barely a chance for her. As far as I hear, Oliver Beaumont is likely to live a thousand

years—in fact, you have only to look in his face and see long life, and health and prosperity in it. A chance," he added, suddenly becoming grave, for in his illness he had had a few serious reflections, "of course, there is, poor frail mortals as we are, one and all of us."

"And she knows nothing of this?"

"Knows!—she! Why, are you dreaming, boy? This secret must be double-locked in your breast. Do you understand?"

"Oh! yes, father, perfectly. I only asked the question as regarded her. It seemed strange. And the secret has been kept from Oliver Beaumont till now?"

"I fancy so, of course."

"And the condition?"

"Depend upon it, the parents will take good care the condition is kept. Put it out of your head. It is to be nothing but a matter of business to you."

On that day no more was said. Mr.

Dashwood became more ill, and then, after some alternations, recovered. During his illness and the recovery business was entirely forbidden, and having set his mind at rest regarding a few things which interested him, he obeyed the restrictions laid upon him.

It was when he was nearly well again that the letter from Mrs. Beaumont regarding Oliver's choice came, and the answer which has been mentioned was returned. On that day he said to his son, as he put the letter into his hand—

“The condition is kept, you see.”

Philip read the letter, and said, “Yes, I see.”

“Young Beaumont will come into the office, and you must do your best with him. His face”—Mr. Dashwood looked about on the table at which he was writing, and after a search found the photograph of Oliver—“is not, strictly speaking, intellectual, but it is a good face, not without intelligence. I

have known those broad British faces make good men of business."

"I should say," Philip said, with a smile, "that it would make a good cricketer."

"Ah, well, yes," and Mr. Dashwood laughed. "But a good cricketer need not be a bad man of business. We must do the best we can for the young fellow. Make him work."

"It is of no great importance, I suppose," said his son, who felt at the moment a grudge against Oliver for being alive and well, and able to choose a profession; "the condition is kept, and there the matter ends."

"In one sense, certainly, but not morally. What that poor fellow, Captain Delaford, was anxious to secure was a successor who could understand his business and do his duty. Don't talk like a foolish young man, as if property had no duties. In these days, I can tell you—speaking not morally, but for self-interest's sake—it is a matter of

great importance that the duties of property should be known and remembered."

"I am not so foolish a fellow, sir, as to doubt it; and what I think is that Captain Delaford's will would be much better carried out if Miss Vaughan had the property."

"Miss Vaughan!" and Mr. Dashwood frowned. "Miss Vaughan has nothing whatever to say to Oliver Beaumont's property. Don't make me regret that I have made you a partner to my secrets, Philip."

"Not if I can help it, father. But it is impossible for a man not to think. I only said what I thought."

"In these matters of business it is best not to think. Let the subject rest."

CHAPTER XIV.

OLIVER BEAUMONT was made happy in the month of August by receiving an invitation from Frank Vaughan to visit the Parsonage at Glenowen. In Frank's letter was an enclosure from Rosamond.

"MY DEAR OLIVER,—If you accept and come to see us, do you think you might be allowed to bring your sister with you? Papa and Laura and I will all be very glad to make acquaintance with her, and will take great care of her.

"Ever yours,

"ROSAMOND VAUGHAN."

Oliver was pleased with this enclosure, so far as his sister was concerned, and Doro-

thy was in ecstatic delight ; but he felt a twinge of discomfort, and for this reason. She began, " My dear Oliver," and he was beginning to feel important enough not to be pleased with the freedom of an appellation which he had once " particularly liked." After recalling, however, the time when he had asked to be called Oliver as a favour, he recovered his serenity, and felt nothing but pleasure in the prospect before him.

Oliver had once seen Rosamond since the visit which had left such impressions on his memory. A year and a half later he had gone to Glenowen at the beginning of the holidays, but only for three days, as he was wanted at home. On that occasion the impression had been confirmed and deepened, but no excitement of mind had followed ; he was full of other things—of divers plans of amusement—and had scarcely *thought* at all. Now, however, her image rising up in memory, he did feel excitement. He wondered whether she was changed ; he won-

dered whether he was changed ; he wondered what she would think of him, and threw back his shoulders and surveyed himself with a kind of pleased consciousness that he was fit to be seen. He was a modest youth, and did not go further, nor was there a shadow of conceit as the consciousness arose, nor did that self-satisfaction last more than a moment.

Mr. and Mrs. Beaumont were not rich enough to indulge in many excursions, but Dorothy was a good girl, and both were anxious to give her the rare pleasure of visiting with Oliver. The brother and sister therefore set forth together.

As they went in the fly from the station to Glenowen, both were thoughtful. Dorothy was occupied only with the shy thoughts of a girl who had never left home before ; but Oliver, more advanced, with the shy thoughts of a youth who was about to meet the lady on whom he had fixed his fancy. Although a few days before he had satisfied

his mind that he was fit to be seen, now that the moment of inspection was approaching, the favourable impression vanished ; he feared lest she should think him only a “lout of a boy.” The “my dear Oliver” was recalled, and a second time with a sensation of discomfort.

“Is she alarming?” Dorothy asked at last, with a kind of sigh.

No name was named ; but Oliver was thinking of the same person, and did not notice this.

“No,” he replied, encouragingly—“not alarming. Besides, if she was, Dolly, *you* will have most to do with Laura.”

“Oh ! shall I ? I don’t think I shall mind *her* ; but I should like Miss Vaughan to like me.”

“She’s sure to like you if you behave yourself,” Oliver said, recovering himself, to tease Dorothy.

“Mamma says she is sure Miss Vaughan is not a common person.”

Oliver could scarcely restrain an undue warmth of manner in replying to this observation. But as he was not going to allow Dorothy to have any insight into his feelings, he did restrain himself, and only said, sedately, "I think she is uncommonly good-natured; and you need not fuss yourself, Dolly, for, as I said, she is sure to like you, if you do but behave yourself decently."

Dorothy said no more. Not that being told that all depends on one's proper behaviour is exactly comforting, but she had relieved her mind by expressing her tremors, and was satisfied.

No sooner had they arrived at Glenowen than the trepidation of both brother and sister vanished into thin air. The cordial welcome, the minute sympathy, the brightness, peace, and harmony, drove every sensation away; every sensation of discomfort, of strangeness, most of all, of self. And that is the charm of charms. There are societies, and those not devoid of

kindness and the desire to please, in which self, one's own body and soul, remains, or becomes, the one predominant object—a lumbersome appendage, which is not to be shaken off. And there are others in which, from some cause, self flies away on wings, or melts into perfect harmony with the bodies and souls of others. And this was the case at Glenowen.

Oliver totally forgot, for the first few days of his stay, to consider whether or not he was a lout of a boy. All things were so exactly as they had been that he fell back insensibly into the being a boy, without annoyance or consideration. Frank was the most changed of the party. His few months at Oxford had already given him age. His mind was full of thought, full of questionings, full of care; yet even he, feeling insensibly the influence of home; a home in which—which is rarely the case—there was monotony without dulness, and self-restraint without strictness, fell back into boyhood,

and seemed content to enjoy himself for awhile without fear.

A week had almost passed before Oliver began to have uncomfortable sensations ; and the feeling that roused him from his tranquillity was a momentary jealousy of Dorothy. He called her one evening into his room, to mend some buttons and button-holes. Oliver was, as an Irish maid had once said of him, "very 'cute in getting off his buttons ;" and Dorothy was often employed on this particular job. While she sewed she talked, and from the excitement of her visit talked freely, which was unusual with her. She spoke of all the family, praising each with warmth ; but the burden of the song was always Miss Vaughan. Rosamond had exercised over Dorothy the same fascination which Oliver had early felt.

"Last night she was so very good-natured," Dorothy said ; "and told me all about her plan."

"What plan ?" Oliver asked, curiously.

"Oh! don't you know? I thought of course you knew, as Laura said it was a real plan. She wants to build a hospital."

Dorothy said the words with deep awe. She was a good little humdrum thing, brought up in a good humdrum home, and she had felt as great a surprise and awe at the idea of Rosamond's wish as most would have felt in its fulfilment.

"No, I never heard," Oliver said, coldly. He could not help a sharp pang of jealousy that it should have been Dorothy who told him of anything to do with Rosamond.

Dorothy did not exactly remark the coldness of the tone; but girls attached to their brothers have quick instincts, and she began to explain.

"This was how it was. Laura and I were talking of wishes—what we should wish for, and if anyone gave us ten pounds what we should do with it. I could not think; but Laura said she did wish for a gold cross to hang round her neck. But then she said

that, even if she had ten pounds, she should not buy the cross ; she thought she should give it to Rosamond to begin her plan. So then she told me about that ; and it was so very strange, and so interesting, that I asked Miss Vaughan, and she told me all about it. It is to be a hospital for unhealthy children—a thing I never should have thought of. But then, she says, there is not much chance, because it will cost ever so much money ; only she keeps it in her head. It is really a wonderful plan, Oliver ! ” and Dorothy opened wide her eyes, and looked excited.

“ Don’t stare about—get on with my buttons,” Oliver said, not crossly, but authoritatively.

He felt extremely put out ; and he kicked off a shoe, and opened a drawer with violence. Why was Dorothy to have told him all this ? Did Rosamond think him nothing but a lout of a boy ? Then he suddenly became calm, stately, and dignified, and, sitting down on his bed, said, carelessly,

“It sounds a good idea. Unhealthy children! Poor things! I suppose there are some. But, do get on, Dolly, or you will never be ready for dinner.”

From this moment Oliver lost his peace of mind. He began to remark, as Philip Dashwood had done, how seldom he could talk to Rosamond ; but instead of seeing, as Philip, a man of experience, had seen, that it was owing to circumstances, Oliver vexed himself by thinking that she did not think him worth speaking to. And, in his vexation, he kept on repeating, “And she need not think me so little worthy ; for if my dreams had been true—and perhaps they are true, after all—she would find that I could help her in her best plans. And I am sure I should be glad to help her.”

For Oliver, although fully believing his mother, and acknowledging that he must not be too sure, still, in his innermost heart, clung to the notion that there must have been something in Bun’s story—

something that would turn up some day.

Oliver was not much used to vexation. The greatest he had yet suffered from had been when an unintermitting rain had set in on a day when, as it seemed to him, life depended on sunshine. One day, indeed, of disappointment he had endured a few weeks before, when his mother had damped his dreams, as he for one day thought, for ever ; but partly the return of hope, which took place on the following morning, and partly the fact that his was not the mind that, as yet, at least, could fret much about a future of any kind, had prevented even that disappointment from being severe.

He was vexed now, without knowing why ; and this kind of trouble was new to him, for it had feeling in it. The fear that Rosamond thought but little of him had made his feeling for her assume a more definite form. He lost his boyish contentment, and was even sometimes morose. This latter mood did not last many minutes

together, but the variableness of temper was more striking in him than a constant depression would have been.

When she had remarked these changes for two or three days without notice, Rosamond said to Frank,

“Oliver is changed since he last came here. At first I thought he was not; but he is.”

“He is older,” Frank said.

“Don’t you think there is something the matter with him?”

“Not in particular. It is not so easy, as one grows older, to be always merry. There are a great many things to think about.”

Frank had not made any very special observations on Oliver’s moods. He was himself full of thought, not free from care; and although to the chief part of his thoughts—the intellectual ones—he found no response in Oliver, to some he did. Oliver, in his way, was quite as anxious to keep straight as Frank was, and the friendship of the

young men was an assistance to both. He thought it quite natural for Oliver to be older.

Rosamond had, however, that peculiar disposition of sympathy which actually feels the troubles, light or large, of others, and she felt certain Oliver had something on his mind.

Going into the drawing-room on the same day that she had asked this question of Frank, she found Oliver there alone. He was sitting in the window with a book. As he was interested in this book, which, indeed, Rosamond had recommended, there was nothing remarkable in his occupation; but he had shortly before started to walk with Frank, Laura, and Dorothy, and Rosamond was therefore surprised to find him thus engaged.

The fact was, he had turned back in the faint hope of finding Rosamond alone. Of this he was conscious. What he wanted to say to her, he did not know; but he wanted

some conversation—something which should relieve his mind of the fear that she thought nothing of him, or lightly of him, or still looked on him as a lout of a boy. He wished to establish himself in her eyes as a real person. If this was done, then he felt he should be happy again.

In his early boyish days, Rosamond had been conscious of his admiration for herself—amused at it, and pleased with it. Since those days Oliver had not been demonstrative, and the idea that Oliver, the youth with the “broad British face,” as Mr. Dashwood had characterized it, was troubled with sentimental troubles, would not have presented itself to any fancy.

“I thought you were out walking, Oliver,” she said, pausing a moment to speak.

“So I was, but I turned back. Are you busy?”

“Not at all. Do you want me?” and she closed the door, took up some knitting

that lay on the table, and sat down near him.

“I don’t want anything in particular, but I was rather—rather offended at something. Why have you never told me about your plan?”

“About my plan! About my hospital, do you mean?” and Rosamond looked at him surprised.

“Yes—Dorothy told me.” Oliver paused a moment, for he would have given the world not to say what he was going to say next; but do what he would, the words seemed to say themselves. “I cannot think why you should have told Dorothy, who is only a new friend, and that I, who have known you for years, should never have heard of it.”

“But, Oliver, it is only an idea.”

“I know—Dorothy told me—but that makes no difference. You wish it?”

“Yes, I wish it; but don’t you think I should be very unwise to speak much of a

thing that is only a fancy, and that there does not seem any, not the most remote, possibility of accomplishing?"

"I don't see that. You might speak to your friends, and perhaps they might help."

"I sometimes think," Rosamond said, speaking half to herself, "that it is hardly right to think as much about it as I have done. I once asked papa the question, and he said he had often read of people who had had strong wishes, who were at some time able to do, if not what they wished, yet, either by themselves or others, some part of what they wished; and therefore, as I had so early had this fancy, he would not at all advise me to put it aside."

"No," Oliver said. He was not exactly examining into and assenting to Mr. Vaughan's principle, but he liked to hear Rosamond speak, and was encouraging her.

"But then he did not advise me to talk about it. He said such a work ought to be a very good work—a sacred thing, and it

would not do to have it lightly discussed. Do you see what I mean?"

"Yes, quite; and I am very much obliged to you for explaining."

Oliver felt satisfied now. Rosamond had spoken very seriously; she could not, therefore, consider him only a boy.

"But besides that, Oliver," Rosamond went on smilingly, "you must remember that it was Laura who told Dorothy. It seems Laura had an imaginary ten pounds, which she was kind enough to give me for this purpose. In making her decision on the point, she told Dorothy what I wished, and then Dorothy came to me."

"Yes, Dorothy told me that. But still I must say I thought I might have heard."

"There is still another besides," Rosamond continued. "Do you know, Oliver, I think I should very soon have told Dorothy myself, for she is just the sort of person who could really help in such a plan."

"Poor Dolly! could *she* help?"

“Yes, that she could. If ever the day came when the plan could be real, she is just the sort of person whom I should like to have to help me. She would be perfect with children, either to nurse or to teach them.”

“I am glad you like Dolly.”

“I like her very much. We all like her, and we are so much obliged to you for bringing her.”

“Poor Dolly! she was very glad to come. Our home is very nice, and I am very fond of it, but there is nothing very lively. I was afraid you would think Dorothy dull.”

“Not at all dull,” Rosamond said, heartily.

“But she is not clever?”

“No, I should not suppose she was; but then dulness does not quite depend on that. To be dull is to have no thoughts, no curiosity, no interest in anything. Now, you know that is very unlike Dorothy; there is always plenty to say to a mind like hers.”

"I am very glad to hear you say that. I was afraid you liked only clever people."

"Why should you think so?" Rosamond asked, smiling.

"Because you are clever yourself—you know you are. I am sure living with you gives one quite a new sense; I don't know what it is, but it makes the world seem a most amusing place. Now tell me, don't you like clever people?"

"I think I like what you have so kindly expressed about me. I like to meet people who give me a new sense. It is not because I am clever, but because I want to know. The world is full of great things and beautiful things, and I long to know all its secrets. Perhaps by my inquiries I make other people think; for that reason I like, not so much clever people as people who have their eyes open, and can tell what they meet with in life. Some day I shall be coming to you," she added, smiling,

"with some hard questions. Frank tells us you are to be a lawyer."

"I am afraid I shall not tell you much," Oliver replied, smiling, yet pleased at her words. "I wish I could hope I should."

"But of course you will. There are a number of things about the laws and old customs of England which I am curious about, and I quite look forward to having my questions answered by you some day. Papa was very glad when he heard you had chosen the law; he always had a great fancy for lawyers, and if he had time would like to study himself."

"He was talking to me about it," Oliver said. "But do you know," he added, gravely, "you make me ashamed. I had never thought about the law as anything; I chose it more for fun than for any real reason."

"For fun!" and Rosamond laughed. "From things I have heard, I should have

thought the study of the law was not exactly fun."

"I suppose not, if one thinks. But I don't think much, unless you make me. Do you think it is right to be ambitious?"

"Ambitious to excel—oh! yes, certainly. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' Do you remember?"

"Then do you think I ought to work hard if I begin to be a lawyer?" Having accomplished this interview with Rosamond, Oliver was determined to make the most of it. He kept driving on, hardly knowing what he was saying.

"Oh! yes, certainly."

"What, try to get on, and make money?"

"Well, Oliver, yes, I do think so. You put it very hardly and coldly, but I think labouring and earning is a very high calling, and what a man is especially appointed to do."

"But it makes people selfish, don't it?"

"It ought not; or it would not be what

they are appointed to do. Do you mind if I quote some more words from the Bible to you? I always think that what St. Paul says, sanctifies all earning. 'Let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that *he may have to give to him that needeth.*' You see what a motive he puts for earning—for making money. If people would but think of this while they were making it, and when they had got it, what a different world this might be."

"What thoughts you have!" Oliver said, gazing at her. "I never knew anyone like you."

"If I have any good thoughts, papa taught me. I do not think there are many people like him—that I must own."

"I like Mr. Vaughan, and admire him, and I like you all; and my acquaintance here has been like a new life in me. But, Miss Vaughan—" Oliver paused, and a glow came into his cheek.

"But what?" Rosamond did not even

feel uncomfortable. Never had he been more boyish in his talk than on this day.

“What I should like to say—only that really I hardly dare—but it will make no difference, for whether I say it or not, I feel it—what I want to tell you is, that what I like and admire most in the world is you.”

“Oh! Oliver!” she said, hardly uncomfortable, though certainly annoyed, “don’t say such things. It does not do. It would spoil all our pleasure.”

“I see you scorn me,” he said, his cheek becoming purple with the manly effort to suppress his agitation; “and I knew you would. But I felt I must say it once—and now you know.”

“My dear Oliver,” and she laid her hand soothingly on his arm, bending towards him with a motherly grace, “you must not use such a word as scorn; and you must not talk as you do. I am very glad you like me, and I am sure I like you; but that is a different thing. I don’t quite know about our

ages, but I know that I feel years and years older than you—like your aunt, or elder sister—or your mother, almost. And I think this is really what you mean; and if I can be in any way your friend, or adviser, or comforter even, in the troubles of life, it would be my greatest happiness to be so."

Her beautiful face beamed with its kindly feeling as she spoke; and Oliver sat with his eyes riveted upon her.

Though kind her words, however, and though warmed by gentleness and sympathy, no lover—even the youngest—could feel them anything but flat. They laid a soft yet cold hand on all aspirations and expectations. Oliver felt this, and for two or three moments was paralysed with mortification.

But this mortification was only the insensible instinctive sensation of the instant; the moment he recovered to think, thought revived him. He had not expected any other

result. What could he have expected—he, unworthy youth as he was—of her who had attained the perfection of womanhood? His cheek became for a second crimson, and then pale, and he pressed his lips tightly together, and then he recovered himself, and spoke.

“ You are very kind, but that is not what I meant. I do know what I mean.. Of course I am asking nothing, nor expecting anything of you ; but I know what I feel. I know that it is now my wish, and I know that it will be my wish, to—to—to lay down my life at your feet ; and I know, also, that, though it is not, I suppose, likely that I should have much to offer, whatever I do have I would lay at your feet also, for you to work all your will with.”

He sat a little forward, speaking out of his earnest heart his earnest words. He did not throw into them much passion ; he was restrained, respectful, but thoroughly in earnest—every word stamped with the

simple expression of the young chivalrous mind and heart within.

Rosamond was deeply touched, not in any sense of being won—that was not likely; he was nothing but a boy to her—but the intensity of his words, and the feeling towards her which he exhibited, touched and softened her. She drew a little backward, and became graver. She felt how carefully she must speak, lest her kindly feeling should cause future ill. Oliver had certainly accomplished this for himself; he could never be only a lout of a boy, never a boy at all, again in her eyes.

“I hardly know how to speak to you,” she said at last. “Thanks and gratitude are such poor words to give in return for what you have said to me. But I don’t know what else to say, Oliver. Thanks are all that I have got to give. You have made me unhappy, for I should have been so glad to be a real friend to you; and now it cannot be.”

“Do not say unhappy—I cannot bear that.”

“I will try not, then. If you would let me, I should like to forget it all. In one sense I cannot forget. I cannot forget that you would have liked to help me, and I do not think I need. I shall be so glad of help, and prayers, and thoughts from anyone. But if I might, I would forget all that could prevent our being friends hereafter.”

“Then pray do forget it—I would rather you did. It has been on my mind that I must tell *you* what I feel, but I do not want anything from you. You shall see it need make no difference.”

“Then it shall not.” She got up, and went and laid down her knitting. She was longing to hold out her hand to him, thereby to express all the kindness she could not say in words; but she thought it best not to do it. She hung a moment over the knitting while she was thinking, and Oliver

watched her. He was not disappointed at her not making a scene. He was perfectly satisfied with her; but he wondered of what she was thinking now.

Presently she turned back to him, and said, and there was a slight flush on her cheek,

“I must tell papa what you have said, Oliver, because I always tell him everything. But you need not mind.”

“I don’t mind at all. I am very glad for Mr. Vaughan to know.”

“Thank you. Then everything will be quite comfortable again.” She hesitated a moment, then added—“If I put on my bonnet, will you go with me to meet Dorothy and Laura?”

“Yes, thank you—I should like it very much.” And so this conference ended.

Poor Rosamond, who was not stoically made, was trembling and nervous as she left him, and as she rejoined him; but she was satisfied this was the best way to sepa-

rate herself from his dreams while remaining his friend, and she went through her task with composure. And Oliver's tranquillity soon re-assured her. He was happy, and he was satisfied. He felt he had raised himself in her eyes, and had placed himself in that position in which he wished to stand. Not in the position he aspired to, but in the position which at present was the one he wished to occupy.

CHAPTER XV.

AT the appointed time Oliver Beaumont presented himself before Mr. Dashwood, to take his place in his office.

“I should have known you, Beaumont, if I had met you in the street,” was Mr. Dashwood’s greeting, when Oliver was shown into his study. “From your photograph, I mean.”

Oliver laughed.

“My face is one of those that is always like,” he said.

There was not much grammar in his speech, but great good-humour, and Mr. Dashwood examined him kindly.

“It is an honest face,” he observed, “and

I hope will prove a faithful likeness of the man within."

Oliver made no reply. Such questions did not interest him. Of course he was honest—what else should he be?

"But now tell me, Beaumont?" he continued, "what made you think of being a lawyer?"

"Do you think I look unfit, sir?"

"That is answering my question by another. I have not thought about fitness. I only wished to know your motives for coming to us."

"My greatest friend is going to be a clergyman."

"Well! excuse me for asking questions when I have no particular right to do so; I only ask from interest, and from wishing to understand those who come to me. I cannot quite see the application of what you say. You are not going to college, are you?"

"No, sir; but my friend reads hard, and

I wished to do as he did. I had no fancy, and I am sure I have no calling, to make me think of being a parson, so I took the law."

"And have you read hard?"

"I have read a good deal of Blackstone, and some of it I thought very amusing. I don't suppose I read very hard, but I don't dislike what I read."

Mr. Dashwood could not help smiling. He was not a man to unbend, with either the young men in his office or any common acquaintance; he was a dry and worldly man—a man whose natural character is dried by the world's cares; but Oliver's face reminded him of his youth, and he felt a liking for him, and an interest in him.

"You will not have to read hard in our office, but you will have to work hard, and to pay attention, too. You will be of no use to us, and the being here will be of no use to you, unless you take an interest in the details of the work."

“ I daresay I shall, sir. But, whether I do or not, I mean to work hard.”

“ You wish to get on.”

“ Certainly, sir.”

Mr. Dashwood scrutinized him again. He had said of his photograph that those broad British faces sometimes made good men of business; but Oliver’s natural man was less like business than even the photograph: He was puzzled by his hearty way of speaking of work.

“ Are you ambitious?” he said, with a smile.

“ I hardly know, sir. A short time ago I should have said I was not; but now I certainly do intend to do whatever I do well.”

“ And what made the change?” A very slight colour, or rather addition of colour, came to Oliver’s brown cheek, and Mr. Dashwood added, quickly, “ Don’t answer me; I spoke hastily. I have no business to ask questions.”

“I don’t mind answering,” Oliver as quickly replied. “My friend and his family think a great deal about work. I mean they think a man ought to work; and I think so too.”

“They must be very estimable people,” Mr. Dashwood observed, more to himself than to Oliver. He was moralising on the power of influence; this influence seemed so strong.

“There can be no doubt about that,” was Oliver’s reply. “My friend is Frank Vaughan, the son of Mr. Vaughan down at Glenowen.”

“Indeed!—where they were so kind to my son. Yes, there can be no doubt they are estimable people.”

He looked keenly at Oliver for a moment, but said no more on that subject.

“Have you ever been in London before?” he asked, as he sat down and took up a pen, for he had risen while he spoke to Oliver.

“I have passed through it; I have never stayed long.”

“Would you like a few days to see the sights before you set to work?”

Oliver considered for an instant.

“No, thank you, sir, though I am very much obliged to you for offering it. I do not know many people in London, and I do not much care for seeing things by myself.”

“Then be here at ten to-morrow. If I am not in the office, you will be expected, but I will be there if I can.”

“An honest face, and not without intelligence,” Mr. Dashwood said to himself, as he hastily resumed his interrupted writing.
“He may learn.”

Oliver went to work in the office, and fulfilled his intention of working, whether he was interested or not. “Very fairly intelligent,” was the report given of him, after about a week, by Mr. Bolton, the chief clerk.

Philip Dashwood still worked with the other young men, but since he had been put into possession of secrets he felt his position changed ; he worked very regularly, but he was, and showed himself to be, independent of rules. He had always been civil to those with whom he came in contact, and he was civil still, but he was no more than civil, not even to Oliver.

Mr. Dashwood had been taken by Oliver's face and manner. The softening which a severe illness had given to his character had made him more liable to impressions than had been the case with him during many hard-working years ; and Oliver had made an impression he hardly knew why. There was a thoughtless charm about him, and a downright frankness that pleased and refreshed the man of business beginning to feel the weight of years. What he felt himself he had wished his son to feel ; he would have liked that Philip should form a friendship with the young man, and bring

him occasionally to his house. He never said this; like a wise father, he never thought friendships could be formed by words; but when he told his son that Oliver was come, and would be in the office the following day, he added, "You will be civil to him, Philip," meaning a good deal more than he said.

"Oh! yes, sir, of course," was Philip's reply; and no other word on the subject ever passed between them.

But Mr. Dashwood soon saw that his son's feelings and his own did not agree; and seeing this, he let the matter alone.

The fact was, there was no mutual attraction between Philip and Oliver, while there was a something that tended to the contrary. Philip was a good-looking, well-educated, polished young man, very fond of society, but fond also of poetry, and art, and literature. He belonged to a particular class of young men who, having more in them, and higher tastes than the generality, are

apt to look on themselves as a particular class. Natural disposition and a good education made Philip in manner civil to all, but the mass of men were nothing to him.

Oliver, with his broad, bright face, and tendencies to a life of sport, belonged to the mass of men. As young almost as he was, Philip could not of course see the attraction that hung about him as a picture of youth. He saw he was not one of his sort, and, satisfied with the discovery, contented himself with an acquaintance on the surface.

There was, however, another reason for a something contrary to attraction. Without a single bad or malicious thought on the subject, it did vex Philip to see that Oliver was alive. He could not help looking at him as an intruder in the world. How came he to be there, so strong and so healthy, standing in Rosamond's way? He did not say this, nor did he know that he felt a grudge against Oliver; but he did.

indulge a kind of righteous indignation against him on the subject.

Late in the Autumn, Philip took a holiday, and so made his arrangements that he passed a week or two at a country house, from whence a call at Glenowen, by railway, was possible. He made two calls there, and when he came back to London he mentioned the fact to Oliver in a cursory way. They were almost alone in the office —he looked up from his writing, and said to Oliver, who was also busy, “I saw your friends the Vaughans, Beaumont.”

“When?” Oliver asked, eagerly.

“Last week. I went to call at Glenowen.”

“Whom did you see? Frank is not there, I think?”

“No—I saw only the two girls.”

Oliver felt offended. The two girls! The idea of classing Rosamond and Laura together as the two girls! He would not ask any more questions.

“They inquired how you were getting on.”

“Who did?” Oliver was nettled, and asked with a flush on his cheek. The idea of Rosamond asking Philip how he was behaving himself offended him as much for himself as the expression of “the two girls” for Rosamond.

“Laura did. She seemed very anxious about it—she seemed to think it would be rather good fun to see you working hard.”

“Impertinent little thing!” Oliver said, laughing. He was happy at finding Rosamond had not inquired, and good-humouredly said that a hard-worker was not the aspect under which he had exhibited himself at Glenowen. “I hope you gave a good account of me,” he added, gaily.

“Very. I said Mr. Bolton said you were an intelligent, pains-taking young man, at which, I am sorry to say, Laura laughed again.”

“Does he say that?” and a flush of

pleasure passed over Oliver's boyish face.

Philip nodded ; and then twirled his pen for a moment. Oliver had puzzled him—he did not quite understand those changes of mood, that speaking boyish face. The genuine pleasure at Mr. Bolton's good opinion amused him ; but why had he at first seemed displeased at the inquiry that had been made ? While he twirled his pen, and reflected, and vague thoughts came into his head, Oliver said,

“ Did you hear any news ? ”

“ No.” After an instant Philip said, hesitatingly, “ There was a little talk about Miss Vaughan's plan. You know her wish, of course ? ”

“ Yes.” And Oliver felt at the moment, though surprised, thoroughly pleased that he did know it. “ But there is nothing about it, I suppose ? ”

“ Nothing ; nor, I should fancy, ever could be.”

“ I don't see that.”

“ Why, what would you propose? To me it seems the most extraordinary idea to have taken hold of a sensible person, situated as she is. And yet,” he added, and an unexpected warmth came into his voice and manner, “ I cannot help admiring the idea, and, whenever I am with her, being carried away by the same philanthropy; or whatever it may be called,” he ended, carelessly, as if to disguise the interest he had shown.

Oliver made no answer. He was surprised at Philip’s warmth, and meditated upon it, only half consciously, but he forgot to answer his question.

“ Why, what should you propose? ” Philip repeated, after waiting for a moment.

“ Oh! I don’t know; I have nothing to propose,” Oliver replied, laughing. “ Only things happen.”

“ Yes, things happen—sometimes, and in books; but I don’t see what could happen in this case. Perhaps you are thinking of her marriage? ”

Oliver gave a kind of half-assent.

“ Well, that is a possibility, of course. But I suppose £10,000 would be the very smallest sum on which such a scheme could be even set going ? ”

“ I am sure I don’t know. I never think of sums.”

“ Well, but I say, and I am sure I am right, that £10,000 would be the smallest sum required. And now ask yourself. You have drawn some settlements here, I think ? ”

“ Yes ; and curious things they were, I thought, some of them.”

“ Curious or not, you must understand them well enough to see how unlikely it would be that a man would tie himself to give £10,000, without knowing what children he would have, or other contingencies. It could not be expected. Even you yourself in such a case would have scruples about it.”

Philip spoke in mere argument, and be-

cause Oliver would not see or confess the difficulties ; no thought of his peculiar position was, at the instant, in his head ; but a faint glow that passed over Oliver's cheek recalled it to his mind with the sudden thought, "Does he know, then?" But the idea had hardly presented itself before Oliver spoke, and his words gave another meaning to the glow, and another turn to the thoughts in Philip's brain.

"I don't care to argue it out. I was thinking how very little Miss Vaughan would like her plans or wishes made a talk of here."

Now it happened that Philip had at this moment a very good reason to know that Oliver was right, but naturally he did not choose to be called to order by him.

"I think I know what is respectful or not," he said, coldly, "especially to a person like Miss Vaughan."

"Of course," and Oliver raised his eyes good-humouredly and apologizingly. "I

was not thinking of you ; I was thinking of myself, and how very much out of place it was for me to be discussing her settlements—or any one's, or anything," he added, laughing, "for I have got a tough bit of writing here," and he seized his pen and set to work, leaving Philip uncomfortable.

Why had that boy Oliver been so jealous of Miss Vaughan's—what should he call it?—delicacy? Nothing but—nothing but—what should he call it?—admiration—could have made him so—that boy with the broad face—so susceptible. And admiration from him! It was ridiculous—ridiculous!

Philip went over this kind of cogitation two or three times before he began to write, and at intervals afterwards; but the last sight he had of Oliver that afternoon, playing some boyish trick to one of the clerks, his face bursting with schoolboy merriment, finally banished it. It was ridiculous indeed to have had such a thought.

Philip had a very good reason for know-

ing that Rosamond did not wish to have her fancy talked about ; for his visit to her had been on a point connected with the subject, and she had spoken plainly. He had said what he did to Oliver from a mere sudden impulse that seized him, he scarcely knew why ; a desire to sound Oliver's relations with the family. There had been no love of gossiping, or intention to be indiscreet.

His business with Rosamond had been this. He had made, before his acquaintance with her, a bet that one of two sisters would be married before the other. It was a foolish bet, at the best, for he had no grounds to argue from, and three hundred pounds, the amount of the bet, would have been inconvenient to him to lose. He was, however, as he often said, gifted with foreknowledge on such subjects, and in August he proved to have been right, and the bet was won.

Philip had a kindly nature, and many good impulses ; and, since his acquaintance

with Rosamond, the best parts of his nature were coming forward—that is to say, his eyes had opened to a sense of the enormous duties laid upon the wealthy. Many rich people are selfish and luxurious merely from want of thought, and he had been so. In earlier months of the year had he won the bet, he would have spent his money on certain coveted art treasures, waiting in his mind for a lucky day; but his very first thought in this August was, “It shall go to Miss Vaughan’s Cripples’ Home.” And not only because he was in love. Chiefly, perhaps, but not only. He had begun to think of the world’s miseries, and the rich man’s stewardship. To Rosamond, therefore, he carried his three hundred pounds; with genuine warmth and gratitude saying it was a very poor expression of his thanks for their kindness, but it was intended to express it.

Rosamond was naturally much touched by the attention, and though, for more

reasons than one, it was not possible for her to accept the gift, her refusal was given in terms so grateful and so warm that Philip knew he had not offended, and left her with his own feelings towards her considerably increased.

She had, however, as was said, spoken plainly. She did not, she could not wish her cherished plan to be taken up in any such manner. She had no right to collect for any such purpose at the present moment, and, if she had, she could not wish to make a collection of vague sums that might be given, come they whence they might. Her idea was of a much more sacred and orderly kind of charity.

With difficulty she made Philip understand what she meant. But he did at last both understand and acquiesce ; and it was this understanding that had influenced what he said to Oliver regarding the nature of the money required.

CHAPTER XVI.

ALTHOUGH Oliver Beaumont had not been received on intimate terms in Mr. Dashwood's family—to that gentleman's regret—he made a few friends in London; sufficient, indeed, to make his time pass pleasantly. The good-natured squire who had noticed him in the country had a brother and an elder son settled in London. They were not rich people—the son, indeed, was only a clerk in a public office—but they were married, and fathers of families, and kind and hospitable in their measure; and Oliver having been recommended to their notice, they noticed him first for the sake of his recommender, and then for himself.

Sometimes he dined with them ; sometimes he went to the play with them ; in short, they did to him such kind offices as came in their power, and made him known to some friends who were able to do more.

He thus got through the Autumn and early Winter, which otherwise, to a country-bred boy, might have been dreary enough ; and all the while Oliver continued with patient diligence to attend to his duties. He could not stir himself up to much ambition, nor could he quite still the voice that told him he was taking needless trouble ; but something more powerful than suggestions of ambition, or suggestions of indolence, prompted him to do his work with resolution.

And after a time he found, as others will find who try it, that the power of work grows on a man, and that something of the pleasure of work comes to a man. It may not in some natures be a pleasure of a light-some kind ; work may never become that

atmosphere in which they live and breathe freely—it was not so with Oliver—but, nevertheless, it does bring and leave a pleasurable sensation—a feeling of the same kind as that caused by order, or discipline, or cleanliness. He was, however, thankful enough when the time came for a holiday. He was to go home before Christmas, and to remain for a part of the month following.

During the greater part of the holiday he remained at home, and finding Robin, the elder twin, growing up into a boy as hardy and impervious to weather as he was himself, he made him his constant companion, and instructed him in the divers singular pursuits and pastimes which had made the charms of his own life.

In the middle of January, before Frank Vaughan's return to Oxford, Oliver paid him a visit. He walked to Shrewsbury, passed a night with his old master, with whom he had always been on friendly

terms, and then walked on to Glenowen ; there he remained for three nights and two days, and then walked home again, his excursion taking a week altogether, and being altogether very much to his taste.

In this short visit he was so exactly like his old self that Rosamond never felt a moment's awkwardness. She saw that he was become more of a man, and could agree heartily with Laura when she said how much his manners were improved ; but he was improved, not changed. To her he was the same boy Oliver that she had first known, giving to her, indeed, a respectful, adoring attention, but of a boyish kind, free from sentiment, and free, also, from that desire for notice which, during his last visit, had unconsciously depressed him and distressed her.

Not that Oliver was the same, or was free even from sentiment. He never looked at Rosamond without yielding to her, both consciously and unconsciously, the offering

of himself. But though the offering was entire, consisting of the present and the future, there was nothing but the future in his thoughts. So long as she was unmarried, he should wait for her, and wait for hope. He had nothing in the present, either in himself or his circumstances, worthy to lay before her. But both might become better. She knew what he felt, for he had told her, and he could wait. These were his sentiments. His feeling was more chivalrous than sentimental ; but it was true feeling, and it was deep, and it was also growing.

One morning during his short stay he was sitting with her and Frank in the drawing-room. Frank was reading ; Rosamond was working ; Oliver was idle. Something in the course of their talk had brought them to Oliver's business, and he had told her, and amused her by describing, some of the things he had to copy. She had then asked if he worked hard all day, or if they talked in the office.

“Sometimes, of course; but I do not particularly care for anybody there. They are very well, but their conversation is no great temptation to me. I like Dashwood the best.”

Rosamond looked up; she did not quite know to whom the appellation applied.

“I mean young Dashwood, of course—Philip. I like him better than I think he likes me. If he would talk, I should talk, but he does not—not often. He is very agreeable when he pleases.”

“Yes,” Rosamond said. She did not say more, or ask more, but she felt curious to know what Oliver would say about him, and wished to ask questions, although she did not exactly know what to ask. Laura would have asked many and at once, but she was not present.

“He told me he had been down here,” Oliver presently went on to say; “and he told me there had been some talk about—your plan, you know,” he stopped again.

Rosamond looked up, startled, and with actually a blush on her cheek. But it was not the sort of blush Philip would have been pleased to see. Rosamond was very rarely ruffled, very rarely angry, but she was very nearly being so at this moment. To think of her private thoughts and words having been talked over in Mr. Dashwood's office ! There was something so nearly sharp on her lips, that, being singularly versed in self-government, she remained silent, till she could speak gently.

“Is anything the matter, Miss Vaughan ?” Oliver said, watching her ; and Frank now looked up. For when people are studying, they always manage to hear if anything more interesting than common conversation is going on.

“I felt cross,” Rosamond then said, laughing. “I did not like to think that Mr. Dashwood had repeated what I had said.”

“He did not,” Oliver said, very honestly

and very earnestly. “I was not thinking about Mr. Dashwood when I spoke—I was thinking of the plan. All Dashwood said was, when I asked him if there was any news down here, or something of the sort, that there had been some talk about your plan. Not a word more—I mean not a word more of anything that had passed here.”

He leaned forward, looking at her.

“Oh! thank you; then never mind.”

“We did talk about it, though, Miss Vaughan—just a few words, as to whether it ever could be or not.”

“I wish you would not. It is bad enough my talking of it myself. I am sometimes quite ashamed of having such a thought in my head.”

“I would never be ashamed of having a good thought,” Oliver said. He spoke so simply, with such downright prosaic sense, that Rosamond looked at him with a bright smile of approbation and pleasure.

“ You are quite right,” she said, warmly.
“ Thank you for saying that.”

Poor Oliver’s heart leapt with delight at the smile and the words ; but he only said, “ I think it.”

“ What I meant was not, however, that I am ashamed of the thought in itself, nor even of having it myself, except just for a moment now and then, when I am worried. I meant more that I *ought* not to have spoken of a thing which is, I fear, impossible. The thought I could not help having ; but I ought not to have spoken of a plan.”

“ I don’t think anything need be impossible—things come.”

“ Yes,” observed Frank. “ People cannot know what will happen in life ; and most unexpected things do happen every day. The only thing is to have patience. Now,” he continued, warming up, and rising from his chair, “ I heard a story the other day of a lady who had planned to build a church

in some bad and out-of-the-way place ; but she could not get money. Trouble after trouble came, and the family were ruined. But she had patience. Then suddenly some odd old relation died, and left a very large sum to her daughter ; and the daughter, knowing her mother's wish, built the church the very first thing. The mother was dead, but what did that matter to the plan ?"

Rosamond could not help smiling at the consolatory conclusion of Frank's tale—more especially as Oliver looked at him with staring, astonished eyes. Frank, the while, quite unconscious of any defect in his consolation, gravely resumed his seat and his book.

"Frank is quite right," she said to Oliver ; "and if anybody dares to make a good plan, he must be resolved to be glad to have it done anyhow, and by anybody—so that it is done in a good way," suddenly remembering the bet. "And I hope I shall be glad if anybody should be ever stirred up to do it.

But I would rather not talk about it now, nor have it made a topic. Do you understand my feeling?"

"Quite, and I will take care. But I shall not forget it," he added, after a moment—"need I?"

Rosamond smiled, but made no answer, for she did not know how to answer.

"Do you know the Miss Dashwoods?" she asked, suddenly, to turn the conversation.

"Yes—a very little. I don't dislike them."

"Why should you?" asked Frank, again revealing that his studies did not wholly absorb him.

"I don't know," Oliver said, laughing. "I suppose I expected I should; but I don't. I only made acquaintance with them lately. It was at a small wedding-party, given for some cousin or other, and I was asked. They seemed very good-natured, and are rather handsome—one is just like Dash-

wood. But, you know, at those sort of places people have their own friends, and they did not say much to me."

"What did you do, then?" Frank asked.

"I looked about. Old Dashwood came and talked for a few minutes, and then he introduced me to a nephew who is at Eton. I think they thought I was not much better than a school-boy myself. And I did not mind. I would as soon talk to a school-boy as anyone else. This one was very agreeable."

"Did not Mr. Dashwood—our Mr. Dashwood—talk to you?" Rosamond asked. She was interested enough in Philip to feel annoyed at the thought that he had not been good-natured to Oliver.

"He was not there. He had been dining out. He came in as I came away, and he was very civil, and wanted me to go upstairs again with him, but I had had enough. He is always very civil. I like him very much—don't you?" addressing himself to Rosamond.

“Yes, very much.”

Rosamond was working, and working hard; she scarcely looked up as she replied. Could it be possible that a faint, a very faint tinge of pink came to her cheek as she replied? Oliver was not sure, and, in his curiosity and discomfort at the idea, gazed at her so intently that she looked up.

“What are you thinking about?” she asked, smiling; and Frank again put down his book.

Oliver was immensely relieved. No, certainly, there was no pink, and he had made a mistake.

“I beg your pardon,” he said, hastily, but offered no explanation.

Frank stared for a moment, then returned to his book. Rosamond felt a slight disturbance. What was Oliver thinking of, she wondered?

Oliver himself, after a moment, continued to talk as carelessly as he had done before; yet afterwards that one moment’s discomfort

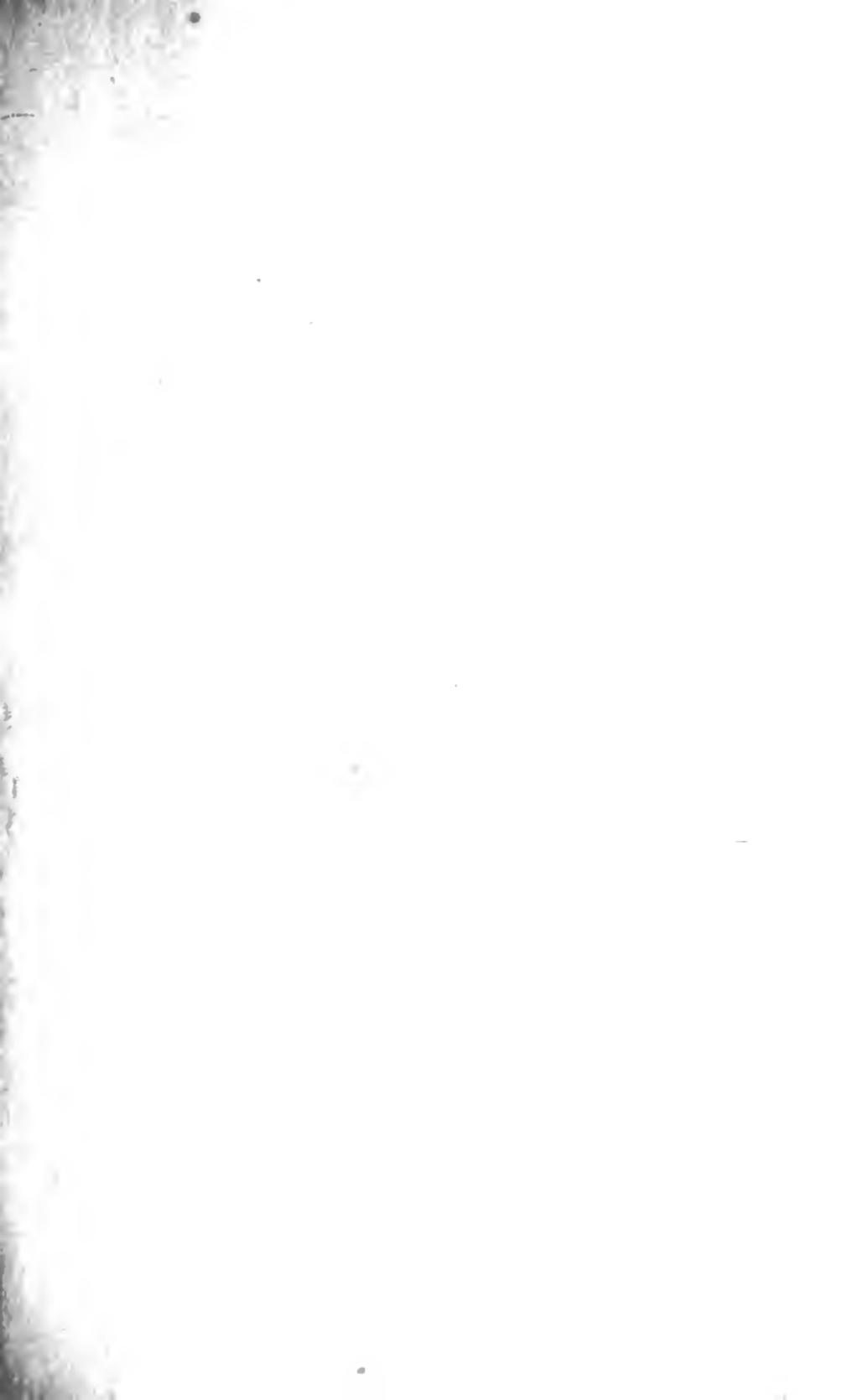
recurred to him, and infused one drop, one very little drop, of bitterness into his chivalrous devotion. Just so much, however, as was needed to turn the quiet feeling into a dormant passion.

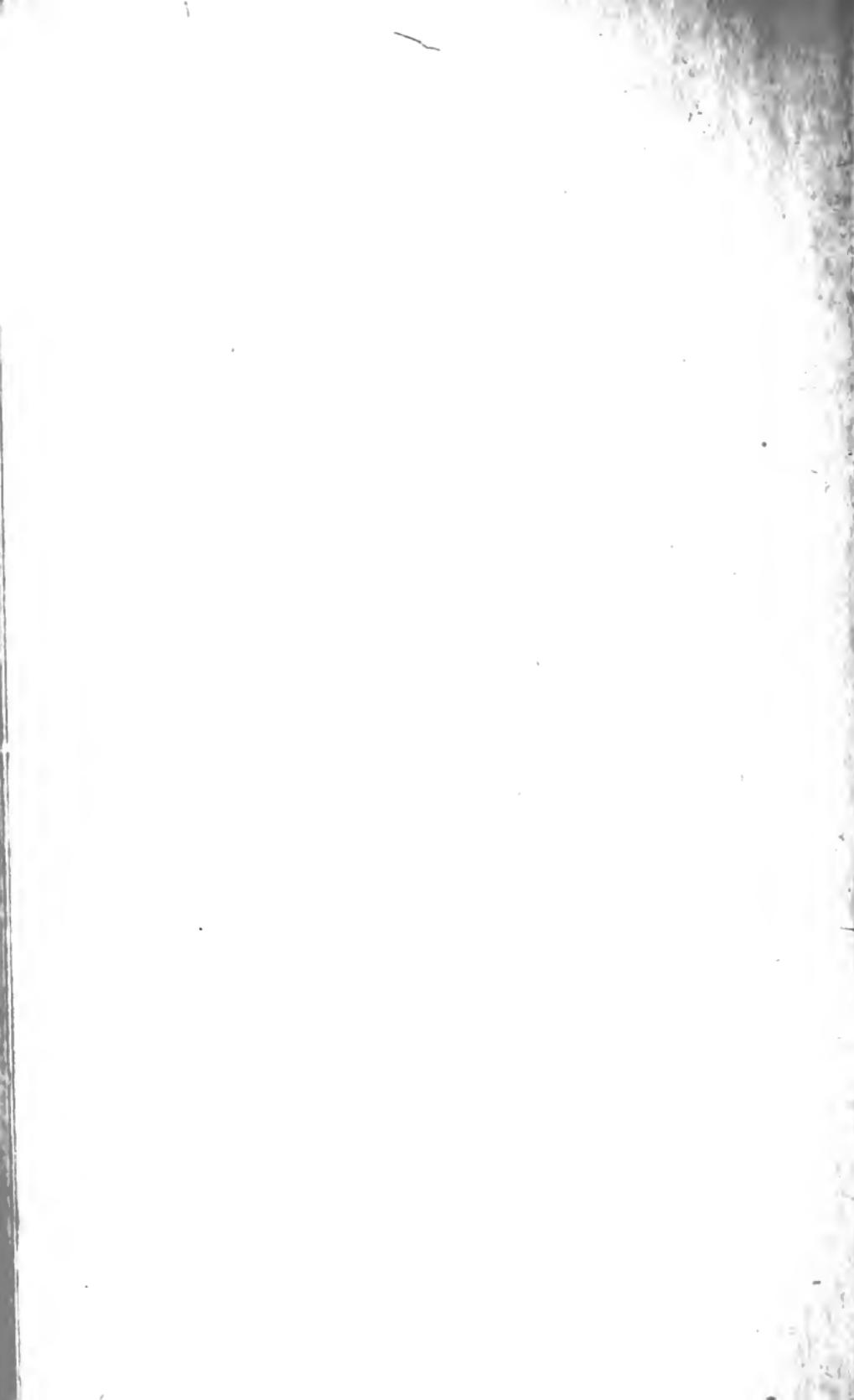
END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.













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